



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE  
**AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES**

**MS-763: Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman Collection, 1930-2004.**

Series I: Wexner Heritage Foundation, 1947-2004.

Subseries 1: General Files, 1949-2004.

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Alumni syllabi. 1989-1990.

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**1** Year Three  
Chicago I & II

**2** Indianapolis: Jewish Studies

**3** St. Louis: Jewish Studies

**4** Year Four  
Detroit: Jewish Studies

**5** Pittsburgh: Biblical Narrative

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WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Dr. Reuven Kimelman

Chicago II/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

After two years on the history of the Jews and the history of Judaism, the third year will be focusing on issues which are important to the community. The division of learning is based on the theory that Jewish leadership should develop from the personal sphere into the public sphere. Thus, the first two years seek to ground the student in the knowledge of the past to assist one in becoming culturally literate and Jewishly competent. This year moves to the types of issues which can help in the exercise of communal responsibility. The issues range from that of pluralism to the ethics of power.

**Session #1:** PLURALISM AND DENOMINATIONALISM

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**Readings:**

-- Greenberg & Kimelman, "Will There Be One Jewish People, Source Book The Four Denominations" in CLAL Perspectives

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**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. What are the three greatest commonalities among the denominations?
2. What are considered the two most significant differences among the various denominations?
3. Is it possible to hold a principled position without negating the alternatives?
4. Are there historical models for pluralism in Judaism?
5. How would you assess their contemporary applicability?

WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

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Chicago I/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

Session #2: CONVERSION AND THE WHO IS A JEW QUESTION

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Readings:

- Klein, A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice,  
pp. 440-448
  - "The Law of Return",  
CLAL Special Issue in conjunction with the Long Island  
Jewish World
- 

Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:

1. What is the purpose of the Israeli Law of Return?
2. What does halakhic conversion entail?
3. Is a convert becoming a member of a people or a religion?
4. Should there be uniform conversion procedures for Israel and the Diaspora?



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Chicago I/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

**Session #3: THE ETHICS OF POWER**

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**Readings:**

- Kimelman, The Ethics of Power,  
"Judging Man by the Standards of God: The Israeli  
Commission of Inquiry Makes Moral History"  
in CLAL Perspectives
  - Greenberg & Elcott, The Ethics of Jewish Power
  - CLAL reprints from The B'nai Brith Jewish Monthly  
"Torah Against Terror: Does Jewish Law sanction the  
Vengeance of Modern-day Zealots?"
- 

**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. What are the differences between Kimelman and Elcott on the prophetic understanding of power?
2. In what sense do Jewish theories of government deal with the potential abuse of power?
3. How do Greenberg and Elcott differ on whether power can be moderated by moral sensitivity without emasculating it?
4. How can the covenantal ideal of a holy nation inform institutional frameworks of power without sacralizing them?
5. What are the sources for arguing that 'an ethic of war' is not a contradiction of terms?

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Chicago I/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

**Session #4: ISRAEL-DIASPORA RELATIONS**

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**Readings:**

- CLAL Sourcebook, "This Land is My Land" Israel, Judaism and the Ethics of Power, pp. 50-62; 107-122
  - Kimelman, "Israel-Diaspora Relations in the Light of the Who is a Jew Question"
- 

**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. What is the role of Israel according to classical Zionist theory?
2. Does classical Zionism allow for an ongoing role for the Diaspora?
3. What should be the configuration of Israel-Diaspora relations  
-- center and periphery, multiple centers, or no center?



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WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

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Chicago I/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

Session #5: THE ETHICS OF LANGUAGE

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Readings:

-- Gendler, The Loving Rebuke

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Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:

1. What is the difference between lashon hara and fabrication?
2. Why is Judaism so concerned with the abuse of language?
3. Is the duty of rebuke absolute or conditional?
4. What is the role of language in transmuting ill-will into good will?

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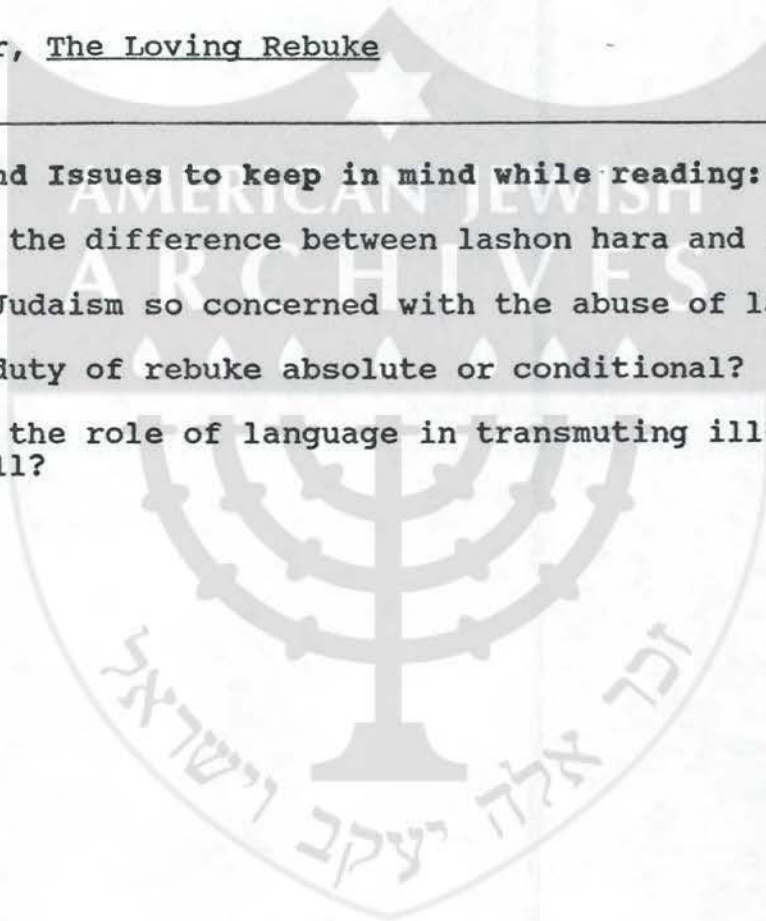
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WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Rabbi Tsvi Blanchard

Chicago I/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

The patterns of traditional Jewish life reflect its fundamental values. The Jewish situation in modernity has raised profound questions about traditional Jewish institutions, and about the values underlying them. In our work, we will focus on three fundamental Jewish values, their role in shaping Jewish practice, and the problems posed by modernity to those values and practices. The values are: (1) human dignity defined in terms of worth, honor and esteem, (2) human freedom, and (3) shared fate and community. As you read these materials please pay special attention to how Jewish teaching and practice embody these three values, and how Jews are dealing with challenges to them.

**Session #6: MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE**

In Jewish tradition, marriage represents the formation of a holy bond. As such, it is termed kiddushin from the root kadosh -- holy. And yet there is a practical side to marriage, the ketuba (marriage contract). The contract, probably rabbinic in origin, served to protect the woman. Questions have recently been raised about the traditional concept, and the role of the ketuba. Are they valid in a era rooted in the notion of personal equality? These questions are raised even more forcefully in the area of divorce and gittin, where women clearly do not have equal rights with men.

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**Readings:**

- Lamm, The Jewish Way in Love and Marriage, pp. 143-173, 197-232
- Haut, Divorce in Jewish Law and Life, pp. 13-45

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**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. How does the traditional Jewish marriage ceremony express the freedom and dignity of both partners? In what ways does it seem not to express these values?
2. How do the needs and beliefs of the Jewish community affect the marriage ceremony, eligibility to marry, and freedom to divorce? What role do you feel the individual should play in making decisions about these areas?
3. Is there a "philosophy" of marriage and divorce reflected in Jewish practice?



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**Session #7: PARENTS AND CHILDREN**

In a post-Freudian era, we are only too aware of the tensions within family life. The traditional authority structure of the family has been compromised. The rise of democratic ideals makes it hard to formulate "groundrules" for appropriate relationships between parents and children. And yet our greatest satisfactions, as well as our greatest pains, often derive from family life. How are we to understand Judaism's emphasis on the centrality of family in the face of these issues?

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**Readings:**

- Education for Inter-Dependence in the Jewish Family,  
Part Two, Section III, Guided Text Study, The Shalom  
Hartman Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies
- 

**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. Use the questions that are part of the study materials.
2. What is a family as opposed to a couple? What do children add to marriage?
3. How are the dignity and freedom of family members balanced with the special role of parents in raising children?
4. What should the contemporary Jewish community do to respond to the needs, problems and possibilities inherent in the existing Jewish family structure?



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Chicago I/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

**Session #8: BUSINESS ETHICS**

We can't open the newspaper without seeing something about another indictment in business. We still talk about "the rat race". A favorite expression among "headhunters" is "this is a dirty business". Too many Jewish names are appearing in scandals. What does integrity mean in business? Judaism governs all of human life. We can not restrict it to Shabbat and Holy days. Jewish tradition speaks forcefully to the everyday world of business and seeks to make it too holy. What exactly is holiness in the marketplace?

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**Readings:**

- Levine, "Jewish Business Ethics in Contemporary Society",  
Business Ethics in Jewish Law, L. Jung, pp. 196-256
- 

**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. How are both individual freedom and community needs balanced in Jewish approaches to economic life? How has Judaism confronted the tensions between them?
2. What is the concept of the human person implicit in the Levine essay? How is it similar to and different from the "American" concept as you understand it?
3. Is it practical and realistic to operate according to Jewish ethics in the world of American business?



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Chicago I/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

**Session #9: MEDICAL ETHICS**

The advances in medical technology have changed both the length and quality of life. But as we can do more, we face more difficult ethical choices. Judaism prizes human life and strives to promote it. But is it possible that traditional Jewish ethics restrict improving the quality of life by banning new technologies in conception? Or by forcing women to bear unwanted children? Or even by prolonging life when it is filled with pain?

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**Readings:**

- Rossner and Bleich, Jewish Bioethics,  
Chapters 1,2,4,8,11
- 

**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. In these readings, what does the word "dignity" mean in the phrase "dying with dignity"?
2. What stake, if any, does the Jewish community have in the decisions its members make about illness, treatment, genetics, etc.?
3. Which two topics did you find most interesting and why?
4. According to the readings, who should make difficult medical decisions and why?



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Chicago I/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

**Session #10: DEATH AND MOURNING**

There is common agreement that, among religious, Judaism has one of the most psychologically helpful systems of mourning. It stresses room for appropriate grieving as well as gradual reentry into the community. And yet death remains an existential mystery. Philosophy, perhaps from Plato, has made coming to terms with death the cornerstone of a meaningful life. Judaism too seems to suggest that those who accept the reality of death are then able to fully enjoy life.

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**Readings:**

- Lamm, The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning,  
pp. 78-80, 86-87, 93-94, 97-104, 109-141, 144-164,  
175-187, 192-198

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**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. Why does Jewish practice remove the mourner from society and only gradually restore him or her to communal life?
2. What do dignity and freedom mean for a mourner?
3. What psychological benefits might come from Jewish mourning practices? What problems do they present?



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WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Dr. Bernard Steinberg

Indianapolis/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

**Session #1: PLURALISM AND DENOMINATIONS**

Jewish unity has always been a concern of Jewish leadership. Indeed, in order to function effectively, every society needs shared values, a common frame of discourse, and a unified sense of purpose. At the same time, debate, dissent, and diversity of opinions characterize classical Judaism. In modern times, the absence of centralized authority structures, and pluralism of practice as well as belief are facts of Jewish life. Moreover, Jewish diversity has taken the form of distinctive denominations each of which is based on its own fundamental assumptions concerning God, Torah and Jewish peoplehood. Jewish unity and diversity, therefore, stand in necessary tension.

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**Readings:**

- Cohen & Mendes-Flohr, Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought, pp. 91-100, 679-684, 755-759, 767-772
- Pluralism and Passion: Study Guide of the Shalom Hartman Institute
- CLAL Perspectives: "Will There Be One Jewish People in the Year 2000?"; "Judaism, Pluralism and Denominationalism"; "Toward a Principled Pluralism".

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**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

Given that Jewish unity and diversity are both necessary features of Jewish life, consider the following questions:

1. According to classical Jewish sources, what defines an argument as "for the sake of heaven"? Which contemporary controversies fit this category? Which do not?
2. What criteria determine the truthfulness of a debate? Are there considerations which outweigh truth?
3. List the defining features of each movement. In terms of its own self-understanding, what values may each of the movements respect or reject in each of the others?
4. What is the connection between ideological commitment and intolerance?



WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Dr. Bernard Steinberg

Indianapolis/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

**Session #2: WHO'S A JEW?/CONVERSION**

Membership criteria, standards of inclusion and exclusion, for any society depend on how a group understands its foundations and defines its overall purpose and identity. The issue of Who is a Jew?/Conversion is therefore as complex as it is controversial. For ironically, the Jews, the oldest people within Western civilization, now face an identity crisis. In the Post-Emancipation world, there is simply no consensus concerning the very basis of Jewish identity. The Jews may be considered an ethnic, religious, national or cultural group. Depending on how one addresses this fundamental question of group definition will determine how one views the Who's a Jew?/Conversion controversy.

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**Readings:**

- Who's a Jew?/Ethnic and Cultural Dimensions of Jewish Identity as Reflected in the Laws of Conversion: Study Guide of the Shalom Hartman Institute
- Moshe Samet, "Who's A Jew (1958-1988)", in The Jerusalem Quarterly, 36 & 37

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**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. What is the formal procedure for conversion in the classical sources. What view of Jewish group belonging is implied by this procedure?
2. If Jewish culture is the basis of Jewish identity, what is the content of Jewish culture? Should Jewish literacy then be required of the convert?
3. If Jewish identity is essentially national, must a Jew become an Israeli citizen?
4. If religion is a defining feature, which beliefs and practices are required?



WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Dr. Bernard Steinberg

Indianapolis/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

**Session #3: THE ETHICS OF POWER**

From the revolt of the Zealots in 66-70 C.E. until recent times, the Jews have functioned in a power vacuum. At the turn of the 20th century, formative European ideologies, such as Zionism, Bundism, socialism and liberalism, attempted to rectify the problem of Jewish vulnerability. Yet, Jewish impotence culminated in the destruction of European Jewry. Virtually overnight, with the dramatic founding of the Third Jewish Commonwealth and the staggering military victory of the Six Day War, the Jews emerged as a formidable political and military force on the world stage. The very speed with which the Jews moved from powerlessness to power has created a crisis of ideology. How does the reality of Jewish power mesh with the ideals of the Jewish legacy.

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**Readings:**

- CLAL, "This Land is My Land?": Israel, Judaism, and the Ethics of Power, A Source Book, (Judaic Resource Text)
- Greenberg & Elcott, CLAL Perspectives: Two Views
- Ravitsky, The Roots of Kahanism: Consciousness and Political Reality

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**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

In this new context of Jewish power, consider:

1. Is there a specifically Jewish ethic of war? of peace?
2. How does the Holocaust shape the Jewish attitude toward an exercise of power?
3. How does Jewish power influence a Jewish person's regard for the non-Jew? In Israel? In the Diaspora?
4. Does Jewish power intensify or diminish the Jewish sense of social justice?

WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Dr. Bernard Steinberg

Indianapolis/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

Session #4: ISRAEL-DIASPORA RELATIONS

The significance of Israel is a truism of contemporary Jewish life. More than any other single factor, Israel has become the focus of world Jewry and the basis for Jewish unity. Yet, paradoxically, a cardinal tenet of Zionism was the "negation of the Exile", that is, the claim that Jewish life in the Diaspora could not and should not continue. This view, though muted today, still shapes Israeli attitudes toward the Diaspora Jew.

Following World War II, the demographic center of Jewish life shifted from Europe to the United States. American Jewry has since emerged as the largest, most affluent, and arguably most powerful Jewish community in the world.

In this context of well-being, most American Jews reject the "negation of the Exile" not only in practice but in principle. Moreover, many resent Israeli attitudes which strike them as dismissive or seem to diminish the significance of the American Jewish Community.

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Readings:

- Israel and Diaspora: A Source Book prepared by the Shalom Hartman Institute
- Mendes-Flohr & Reinharz, The Jew in the Modern World, pp. 330-332, 418-420, 422-427
- Borowitz, The Masks Jews Wear, pp. 151-173
- Hertzberg, Being Jewish In America, pp. 191-230
- Neusner, Stranger at Home: The Holocaust, Zionism, and American Judaism, pp. 99-168



**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. The Zionist claim of the centrality of the Land of Israel is clearly grounded in classical Jewish sources. Yet, Jewish sources attest to the ambiguity of Jewish life in the Land. What are some of the conditions which preclude living in Israel according to the sources? (Compare the Mishnah in Ketubot 110b with later halachic rulings)
2. The Zionist tenet of "negation of the Exile" is based on an analysis of the condition of the Jew in Post-Emancipation Europe. In what ways does this analysis apply to the situation of contemporary American Jews?
3. To a large extent, the relationship of American Jews to Israel is based on financial contributions and/or political involvement. In what ways does this mode of relationship limit the possibility of building a relationship between the two communities?





WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

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Indianapolis/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

**Session #5: THE ETHICS OF LANGUAGE**

The ethics of language is grounded in the concept of the Covenant. The Covenant underlines the centrality of inter-dependence, mutuality and interpersonal relationships. Whether in the marketplace, the public arena, or at home, human relationships are created, cultivated, and destroyed by the capacity to speak and to listen. Hence, the ethics of language becomes a religious issue.

The ethics of language is especially potent because of the power of speech. In the Jewish tradition, the world is created by words, the term Ten Commandments literally translates Ten Utterances, insult is likened to murder, and numerous commandments concern what, how, when, and with whom to speak.

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**Readings:**

- Tanach, Leviticus, Chapter 19:17-18
  - Babylonian Talmud, Baba Metzia 59b  
Yoma 23  
Yevamot 65b  
Shabbat 54b-55a
  - Genesis, Rabba 54
  - Maimonides, Hilchot Deot 2:3, chapters 6-7,  
"Letter to an Inquirer"
  - Hirsch, Horeb, trans. Grunfeld,  
pp. 248-68
-

Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:

1. List those commandments which concern honesty and the prohibition against injuring someone with words. Are these two concerns in conflict?
2. According to Maimonides, list two distinctive functions of the commandment to "reprove". Under what conditions does this commandment apply and not apply?
3. What is the defining principle of Lashon Ha-Rah ("Evil Speech")?



WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Dr. Ronald Brauner

Indianapolis/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

**Session #6: MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE**

Contemporary American domestic life is in turmoil. The tradition of marriage is challenged as perhaps never before. Divorce rates are higher now than at any other time in American history. Domestic stability has always been an outstanding characteristic of Judaism, but Judaism, as a life system, has not had a long experience in an open, democratic society where individual choice and moral and ethical autonomy reign supreme. What insights can Jewish tradition offer in the realm of Marriage and Divorce?

## AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

**Readings:**

- Mishnah, Oiddushin 1:1-4:14  
(selections indicated with checkmark)
- In re Noghrey, California Court of Appeals, 6/14/85
- Burns v. Burns, New Jersey Superior Court, 12/4/87
- Washington Post, 3/4/88
- The New York Board of Rabbis, 5/5/87, 5/13/87
- American Jewish Committee, Chicago Chapter,  
"Divorce and Jewish Law"

**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. What aspects of the Jewish tradition regarding marriage seem no longer workable in a society such as ours?
2. Can any accord be found between the traditions regarding Jewish divorce and the growing sense of gender equality in American life?
3. Where does a tradition draw a line and refuse, ultimately, to bend to the demands of "the modern age"?
4. In what ways might marital stability suffer in a secular society?
5. How can marriage and divorce be "Judaized" in modern American life?



WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

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Indianapolis/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

**Session #7: PARENT-CHILD RELATIONS**

Jewish tradition recognizes that relations between parents and children are the most trying, the most difficult and the most frustrating of probably all human relations. Our own experiences would most likely substantiate this view. Some careful consideration of the complexities of parent-child relations through the accumulated wisdom and experience of our tradition can be enlightening.

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**Readings:**

- Talmud, Oiddushin, 30b-32a
  - Brauner, "Parents and Children"
  - Herring, Jewish Ethics and Halakhah For Our Time  
"Parents and Children", pp. 197-202
- 

**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. How are norms of parent-to-child and child-to-parent relations established?
2. How does one judge whether or not a particular relationship is acceptable?
3. Are there objective criteria for prescribing proper parent-child relations? Can such relations be prescribed?
4. Do different religious systems have different views in this area?
5. Is there a Jewish way to determine proper and acceptable relationships?

WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Dr. Ronald Brauner

Indianapolis/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

**Session #8: TORTS AND BIOETHICAL QUESTIONS**

One of the most troubling and complex areas of contemporary concern is Medical Ethics or, more appropriately, Bioethics. There is hardly a family or even an individual in America who is not touched, sometime in his or her life, by difficult questions in this realm. How does one answer -- for himself or for his loved ones? What guidelines are available? How does one know that the right choice is being made? How can one think "Jewishly"? Does it make a difference?

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**Readings:**

- Mishnah, Bava Qamma 3:1-10; 8:1-7
  - Kellner, Contemporary Jewish Ethics,  
"Fetal Experimentation" (Seymour Siegel), pp. 284-295
  - Bleich, Contemporary Halakhic Problems,  
"Medical Questions", pp. 93-96
- 

**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. What is to be understood by the concept "quality of life" and how does Jewish tradition relate to this concept?
2. What is to be understood by the concept "bias for life" and how does the Jewish tradition relate to this concept?
3. What is/should be the understanding of the concept "human dignity" and what should be the legal and social applications of this concept?
4. How can "Pro-Choice" operate in a halakhic environment?
5. To what extent are we prepared to assert that the Noachide Laws should inform Jewish input into American civil and criminal legislation?



WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Dr. Ronald Brauner

Indianapolis/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

Session #9: DEATH AND MOURNING

People turn to religious systems especially in times of stress and crisis. Many Jews are frustrated by the fact that when the hour of need arises, they are ignorant of what our tradition has to offer by way of guidance and direction. There are many difficult and painful questions associated with death and mourning and it is not unreasonable to expect that Judaism, over the course of 3500 years of experience, should have some valuable and meaningful responses for some of our deepest needs.

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Readings:

- Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, "Mourning", selections from Chapters 1-14
  - Jacob, American Reform Responsa,  
"Mourning Customs", pp. 374-376  
"A Proselyte...", pp. 386-387  
"Christian Relatives...", pp. 390-392
  - Herring, Jewish Ethics and Halakhah For Our Time,  
"Truth and the Dying Patient", pp. 47-65
- 

Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:

1. Does the halakhic system seek to regulate emotion?
2. Why should rules and regulations for procedure be necessary in an area so emotional and so personal as death and mourning?
3. What is the relationship between experience and rationality in the setting of norms of conduct and behavior in life cycle events?
4. How is it possible to "Judaize" death and mourning in the practice of the American Jewish community?



WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Dr. Ronald Brauner

Indianapolis/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

Session #10: JEWISH-GENTILE RELATIONS

From earliest times, the Jewish people have always lived in close association with non-Jews. More often than not, Jews were a minority in the gentile majority culture and we were (and continue to be) faced with the almost daily challenge of determining the degree and scope of our interaction with our neighbors. It seems that we have been consistently confronted with polaric pulls... how to maintain our uniqueness but yet be part of society? How to share and mingle and yet preserve those qualities and characteristics dear to us? How to live a common humanity and yet identify with Jewish religious principles and practices?

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Readings:

- Mishnah, Avodah Zarah, 1:1-9; 2:1-3; 3:1-5
- Jacob, American Reform Responsa,  
"Substituting For Christians on Christmas"

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Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:

1. What is civil religion? Should criteria for Jewish involvement be similar to those for sectarian religion?
2. When does defense of one's identity become rejection of community?
3. When does one surrender the particular for the sake of the universal?
4. Are family upbringing and religious education significant factors in determining the nature and degree of interfaith cooperation?

WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Rabbi Lavey Derby

St. Louis/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

Session #1: MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

At the core of Judaism is a yearning for the redemption of the world, yet renunciation of the physical world was never required by the tradition. Individuals are encouraged -- some would say required -- to enter into marriage and create families as a means of perfecting the world. Marriage thus becomes an arena for personal, spiritual fulfillment as well as for communal responsibility.

As a sacred personal relationship, marriage implies human freedom, dignity and value; as a communal structure it requires rules and norms. The interplay between the sacred and the physical, and between the personal and the communal will be discussed in this session examining the traditions of marriage and divorce.

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Readings:

- Tanach, Genesis, Chapters 1, 2  
Hosea, Chapters 1, 2  
Deuteronomy, Chapter 24:1-4  
Malachi, Chapter 2:13-16
- Talmud Gittin 90a
- The Marriage Ceremony, pp. 41-45  
(from Rabbinical Assembly Manual)
- The Ketubah -- A conservative text  
(prepared by Rabbi Elliot Dorff)
- Shulchan Aruch -- Orach Chayim, Chapter 24  
Even HaEzer, Chapter 25, para. 2
- The Traditional "Get" text, page 479  
(from Klein, Guide to Jewish Religious Practice)
- Lamm, The Jewish Way in Love and Marriage,  
pp. 148-155; 160-163; 190-194
- Feldman, "Marriage and Marital Relations" in  
Health and Medicine in the Jewish Tradition  
pp. 55-68



- Winkler, "Sex and Religion: Friend, Or Foe?" in New Menorah Journal
  - Biale, Women and Jewish Law, pp. 102-113
- 

**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. What implications can be derived for human relationships from Biblical assertion that humans are created in "The image of God"?
2. How does the Jewish marriage ceremony express the freedom and dignity of the partners? In what ways does it not express those ideas?
3. Does the halakha yield a comprehensive value system with regard to sex and marriage?
4. Do the Jewish traditions point to ingredients of marriage which may be lacking in contemporary society? Are there aspects of the traditions that no longer seem applicable in our society?
5. What practical attitudes toward divorce might emerge from the interplay between the spiritual and the physical aspects of marriage?



WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Rabbi Lavey Derby

St. Louis/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

**Session #2: PARENT-CHILD RELATIONS**

The covenant between God and Israel is first given to the family of Abraham and makes the family the focus of faith and religious life. The family is the central carrier and transmitter of the message of divine redemption. And yet, the family is also the scene of the most frustrating, difficult and potentially painful of all human relations. Even the families of our Patriarchs and Matriarchs were not exempt from trying family problems. By tracing the ethical and legal guidelines which Judaism provides in dealing with the complexities of parent-child relationships, we will explore the very foundation of the Jewish vision of perfection and redemption.

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**Readings:**

- Tanach      Genesis, Chapters 12:1-5, 15, 21:1-21, 22, 27  
                 Exodus, Chapter 20:1-14  
                 Leviticus, Chapter 19:1-3  
                 Malachi, Chapter 3:22-24
- Talmud Kiddushin 29a-32a
- Tanhuma, end of Shmini (my translation)
- Greenberg, The Role of the Family
- Hartman, The Family As Mirroring Theological Commitment
- Blidstein, Honor Thy Father and Mother,  
                 PP. 1-24, 31-33

**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. What are the implications of giving the covenant to a family rather than to a faith community?
2. How are norms of parent-child relations established? Are there objective criteria for prescribing proper parent-child relations?
3. To what extent has modernity, with its emphasis on individual achievement and fulfillment, undermined the traditional Jewish family structure? Are there ways in which contemporary society supports the traditional view?



WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Rabbi Lavey Derby

St.Louis/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

**Session #3: BIO-MEDICAL ETHICS**

It is increasingly difficult to carry on a day-to-day life without encountering ethical dilemmas arising out of advances in medicine and technology. Underlying the ethical questions, however, is a broader issue. Medical science represents the ultimate form of human technology, the process by which we use our abilities to shape, change, control and overcome the physical universe and our human limitations.

This session will be divided into two parts. In the first, we will examine Jewish views on the extent and limitations of human ability and responsibility for controlling the world. In the second half of our study, we will discuss Jewish perspectives on abortion -- an issue which pits one set of values against other equally compelling values and which split our society.

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**Readings:**

- Tanach, Genesis, Chapters 1, 4, 9:1-6  
Exodus, Chapters 21:12-14, 21:19, 21:22
  - The Ethics of Life: Abortion texts
  - Greenberg, "Toward a Covenantal Ethic of Medicine", in Jewish Values in Bioethics, chapter 9
  - Greenberg, "Abortion: A Challenge to Halakhah", in Judaism, Spring 1976
  - Herring, Jewish Ethics and Halakhah For Our Times, chapter 1
  - Siegel, "Genetic Engineering"
-



**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. What powers are mandated to us as humans created in the image of God and commanded to master the world? To what extent does the idea of covenant expand or limit our right to shape the physical world?
2. How would you apply the religious idea of human dignity to the usage of bio-medical technologies and research?
3. Do the Jewish perspectives on abortion lend themselves to the language of the "pro-choice"/"pro-life" debate? What other ethical issues and legal categories do Judaism inject into the discussions?



WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Rabbi Lavey Derby

St. Louis/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

**Session #4: DEATH AND MOURNING**

In Judaism, as in other religious traditions, the human being is called upon to support, advance and nurture life, which is considered sacred and of the highest value. A major function of Jewish social and religious constructs is to keep life alive, nurturing its capacity to renew itself and to create an ever-expanding abundant living. Sickness, suffering and death are "enemies" to be overcome. Yet, in affirming life, Judaism cannot deny the reality of death. Jewish traditions must, of necessity, provide guidance to that most painful of human experiences. As we study the customs and procedures surrounding grief and mourning, we will search for both the Jewish psychology of death and the comfort which our tradition provides.

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**Readings:**

- Tanach      Isaiah, Chapters 11:1-9, 25:6-8, 26:19, 65:17-25  
                 Psalms, Chapters 22:30, 48:15
  - Ginsburg, Legends of the Jews,  
                 pp.466-473
  - Lamm, The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning,  
                 pp. 78-80, 86-87, 93-94, 97-104, 111-141, 144-164, 192-198
  - Hartman, A Living Covenant, pp. 258-267
- 

**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. How is the principle of life as the highest value played out in the sources? In what ways is it reconciled with the reality of death?
2. Do you get a sense from Jewish tradition that sickness and death are viewed as punishments for human misbehavior? Are there other authentic Jewish perspectives?
3. Does the halakhah of mourning seek to regulate human emotion? Why should rules be necessary in an area so personal and emotional as mourning?
4. Is there a psychology of mourning to be found in the tradition? What would be its benefit? Where do you see it as problematic or uncomfortable?



WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Rabbi Lavey Derby

St. Louis/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

**Session #5: JEWISH-GENTILE RELATIONS**

From earliest times, the Jewish people have lived in close association with non-Jews. More often than not, Jews were a minority among the gentile majority culture and were (and continue to be) faced with the almost daily challenge of determining the degree and scope of our interaction with our neighbors. It seems that we have been consistently confronted by polaric pulls... how to maintain our uniqueness but yet be part of society? How to share and mingle and yet preserve those qualities and characteristics dear to us? How to live a common humanity and yet identify with Jewish religious principles and practices?

In this session, we will investigate Jewish responses to the non-Jewish world through times of power and times of powerlessness. We will especially focus on the need for a new relationship to be forged in a pluralist, open society.

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**Readings:**

- Tanach, Genesis, Chapters 12:1-3, 17:9-13  
Exodus, Chapters 34:12-16, 21:20
- Gitten 61a
- Palestinian Talmud, Kiddushin 4:11
- Mishna Avodah Zarah 2:1
- Avodah Zarah 35b, 36b
- Shefoch Chamatcha (Haggadah)
- Mishneh Torah, Laws of Idolatry 11:1
- Aleinu (from the Siddur)
- Silberman, A Certain People, pp. 285-324
- Heschel, "No Religion is an Island", Disputation and Dialogue
- Greenberg, "The Relationship of Judaism and Christianity: Toward a New Organic Model"
- Novack, "The Chosen People", in Contemporary Jewish Thought

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**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. How can we balance the particularist needs and goals of the Jewish people with our universal obligation to the world as a whole?
2. What impact have historical circumstances had on our relationship to the outside, majority culture?
3. Must the concept of "chosenness" be reinterpreted in the light of the contemporary Jewish experience?
4. Given that today Jews experience more freedom of choice than ever before in history, is it possible to fashion a positive Jewish identity that is not a rejection of the broader community.
5. How do you think the Jewish community ought to respond to the issues of interfaith marriage and conversion to Judaism?





WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Rabbi Irwin Kula

St. Louis/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

**Session #6: THE ETHICS OF LANGUAGE**

That which distinguishes human interaction is communication through language. We use language to share ideas and feelings, to respond and to elicit response, to span the distance between minds and hearts. With language, we shape our world and manipulate it. Minimally, language makes us human; maximally, language endows us with divine-like power.

Judaism accentuates the power of the tongue. The rabbis taught that "life and death" are in the power of the tongue. The Kabbalists believed that worlds could be created and destroyed by a single word.

In our daily lives, we face numerous situations, interpersonal and communal, in which our use of language can heal and build or can undermine and destroy. Words are seen as so powerful that an entire body of literature and law surround their use. Like any potentially creative or destructive power, we need a set of user guidelines.

In this session, we will focus on the interpersonal misuse of language; lashon hara, the evil tongue. By definition, lashon hara is derogatory language, not slander or lies, but factual information that is unnecessarily negative. The Bible is replete with examples. Joseph speaks it; Miriam speaks it; ten of the twelve spies speak it. The consequences are often cataclysmic and the response of the text is clear. Everyone suffers when lashon hara is spoken: the speaker, the listener, and the person about whom the derogatory remark was made. The rabbis treated lashon hara as a source of a host of social ills. It undermines the fabric of social interplay, dissolving trust and good will into jealousy and contention. What type of community we build and the character of our institutions are molded by the way we speak.

Still in some circumstances, a critical eye is essential. The prophets were unafraid of confronting the Jewish People with derogatory statements about their behavior and character. In fact, there is a commandment to "rebuke your fellow man". How is rebuke defined? When is it appropriate? How do the dialectic values of "rebuke" and the proscription of lashon hara work together? These issues, for us as individuals and as communal leaders, provide a feast of "food for thought" for this session.

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## Readings:

- Tanakh: Genesis, Chapter 18:1-15, 37  
Numbers, Chapters 12, 13  
Leviticus, Chapters 19, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 25:17  
Exodus, Chapter 23:7  
Jeremiah, Chapter 7:3-11  
Psalms, Chapter 34:13-14
  - Talmud Arakin 15b
  - Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Sefer Madah  
Chapter 6:6-9; 7:1, 5-8
  - Kagan, The Chafetz Chaim as adapted from  
Pliskin, Guard Thy Tongue, excerpts
  - Telushkin and Praeger, The Nine Questions People Ask About  
Judaism, pp. 178-181
- 

## Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:

1. What is the relationship between ethics and religion?
2. What is Lashon Harah and how is it different from gossip?
3. How do we balance advocacy with careful speech?
4. Is a leader to be judged in terms of his or her use of language?
5. Is it possible to adhere, in the real world, to the traditional value placed on avoiding Lashon Harah?
6. What does the tradition presume about the power of words, and about the power of human beings by creating these guidelines of Lashon Harah?
7. How do these guidelines relate to the tradition's approach to the powerful forces in life in general ie. power, hunger, sexuality?



WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Rabbi Irwin Kula

St. Louis/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

**Session #7: THE FOUR DENOMINATIONS/PLURALISM**

Two hundred years ago, one could speak of a Jewish community which considered itself bound by the rabbinic traditions of the past centuries. With the advent of modernity in a world in which new ideas and passionate ideologies were suddenly available, the nature of the Jewish community began to be transformed. Jews needed to seek new landmarks and bulwarks if they were to survive at all in the new world of perpetual change. A variety of Jewish challenges of the modern age emerged and with that serious questions as to what binds all Jews together.

Today, there are four denominations, with powerful visions of Judaism and the Jewish community, that organize and give meaning to the Jewish people. Collectively, they represent a remarkable response to modernity. While much is shared between the movements, it has been difficult to communicate each movement's commitments to the others.

In this session, we will examine the way in which each movement defines the Jewish way. In addition, we will explore the question of pluralism: Can there really be Jewish Unity amid the diversity of modern Jewish life?

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**Readings:**

- Woocher, Sacred Survival, pp. 1-7
- CLAL Perspectives Sourcebook, The Four Denominations,  
The Reform Vision  
The Orthodox Vision  
The Conservative Vision  
The Reconstructionist Vision
- Fackenheim, Quest for Past and Future  
"Dilemma of Liberal Judaism", p. 130-147
- Plaut, The Growth of Reform Judaism,  
"The Pittsburgh Platform"  
"The Columbus Platform"
- "Looking Back Looking Forward", Presidents Address  
Central Conference of American Rabbis 1985

- Borowitz, "Excerpts from Reform Judaism, A Centenary Perspective"
- Excerpt from "Hatam Sofer"
- Samson Raphael Hirsch, The Nineteen Letters
- Excerpts, Solomon Schechter  
Emet Ve Emunah  
Mordecai Kaplan
- Reuven Kimelman, "Judaism, Pluralism and Denominationalism",  
CLAL Perspectives
- Cohen and Mendes Flohr,  
From Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought,  
Conservative, p. 91-99  
Emancipative, p. 165-170  
Reform, p. 767-772  
Orthodox, p. 679-684  
Reconstructionism, p. 755-759

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**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. Why did the Enlightenment/Emancipation pose such a significant challenge to Judaism?
2. What distinguishes each denomination response to the challenge of modernity? What does each denomination presume about the interaction/relationship between modernity and Judaism? Is Judaism on the defensive? Is modernity?
3. Judaism can be seen as being framed on a grid of God, Torah and Israel. How does each denomination characterize the relationship between, God, Torah and Israel?
4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each response?
5. How are these responses interdependent historically, sociologically, psychologically, economically, etc.? How have they insured the continuity of the Jewish People?
6. The various denominations make up overlapping faith communities. While the overlay makes for cohesiveness, the remainder can make for either creativity or fragmentation. How can the movements co-ordinate differences while underscoring commonality?
7. The denominations are pre-Holocaust/pre-Israel developments. How have the denominations been affected by these two central events? How ought they be?



WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Rabbi Irwin Kula

St. Louis/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

**Session #8: WHO IS A JEW?**

Determining who is counted as a Jew in a variety of settings and under what circumstances has preoccupied the Jewish community since biblical days. Every society must define the categories of rights and participation available to those who want entry. There are two paths within Judaism today which confirm ones Jewishness -- birth or conversion. But this simple formula has been challenged in a wide variety of ways. For Jews today, this means dealing with the dilemmas of patrilineal descent, the Israeli "Law of Return", and laws of conversion. These issues threaten to split the Jewish people. This session will explore the increasing complexities of the "Who is a Jew" question with an eye towards Jewish history, law and tradition.

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**Readings:**

- Tanach      Genesis,      Chapter 12:1-3  
    Chapter 17:1-26  
    Chapter 20:8-20  
    Chapter 38:1-5  
                 Exodus,      Chapter 2:16-24  
                 Deuteronomy,      Chapter 7:14  
                 Judges,      Chapter 14:1-3  
                 Ruth,      Chapters 1,4  
                 Isaiah,      Chapter 56:1-7  
                 Ezra,      Chapters 9,10
- Mishna Kiddushin 3:12
- Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, "Laws of Prohibited Intercourse"  
    Chapter 13:1-5  
    Chapter 14:1-3
- Cohen, "Conversion to Judaism in Historical Perspective"  
                 in Conservative Judaism, (Summer 1983)
- Schiffman, "Jewish Identity and Jewish Descent",  
                 in Judaism, (Winter 1985)
- Greenberg, "The Role of the Family in Judaism"
- Law of Return 1950,  
                 (with 1954, 1970 additions)

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**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. What is the notion of peoplehood in Judaism? Why is it important?
  2. How is one deemed a member of the people of Israel, the people of the covenant?
  3. How has the determination of membership changed throughout Jewish history and why?
  4. How is membership in the Jewish people managed today?
  5. What were the reasons for the decisions of the Central Conference of American Rabbis on patrilineal descent? What is the effect on the Jewish community?
  6. What arguments could you make for a more inclusive policy regarding entry into the Jewish people? What arguments could you make for a more exclusive policy?
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WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Rabbi Irwin Kula

St. Louis/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

**Session #9: ETHICS OF POWER**

Perhaps never before in history have Jews and the Jewish people wielded as much power as we hold in our hands today. Whether through the army of Israel or through American Jewish political clout, the people left helpless in the Holocaust are now taking control of their own destiny. Yet, the use of power in modern age is a fragile reality fraught with complications. What happens when Jews became conquerors and when Jewish weapons are used to suppress the downtrodden and disenfranchised?

The Jewish promise is that we will be a great nation in our land but also a blessing to the world -- that the Jewish state is a seed through which worldwide redemption will flourish. Is there a Jewish way to reconcile this promise and the use of power? Is there an ethics of power in real life?

We will explore how our people has historically managed power during the few periods of our history when we possessed it and how we conceptualized its use during the many years of being powerless. Finally, we will see if in the face of 2,000 years of powerlessness we can develop a Jewish ethic of power for our contemporary era.

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**Readings:**

- Tanach, Genesis, Chapter 1:26-28  
Deuteronomy, Chapter 17:14-20  
Chapters 20,21  
I Samuel, Chapter 8  
Isaiah, Chapters 11:1-9, 2:4
- Maimonides, excerpts from Laws of Kings
- Bialik, excerpts from City of Slaughter
- Kimelman, The Ethics of National Power,
- Greenberg & Elcott, The Ethics of Power: Two Views
- Kahn Commission Report
- Principles of Warfare of the Israel Defense Force  
Excerpts

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**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. What is the Jewish view of power in light of these texts?
2. What is the role of moral judgment in the exercise of power? In political decisions? What is the relationship between the morally preferable and the politically possible?
3. Can ethical sensibilities be maintained under the conditions of war?
4. How does Judaism negotiate the seemingly contradictory roles of the ethical life and military force?





WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Rabbi Irwin Kula

St. Louis/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

**Session #10: ISRAEL-DIASPORA RELATIONS**

It is extraordinary to live in the age when the Jewish state has been re-established in the Land of Israel. The state of Israel has become the central focus of Jewish life and Jewish expression. Our fundraising efforts, educational programs and political action all reflect our Zionist commitment. It is not an exaggeration to claim that we perceive the future of the Jewish people to be inextricably linked to the Zionist enterprise.

Yet, by the same token, the vast majority of Jews have voted with their feet and remained in the Diaspora. In recent years, the relationship itself, between the Israel and Diaspora Jewish communities has undergone significant change. We are now faced with the arduous task of sorting the dreams and fantasies, the disappointments and angers that make up the marriage of Diaspora Jewry and the state/people of Israel.

In this session, we will examine the relationship between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel in Jewish theology, law and history. We will explore the inherent tension between the centrality of the Land of Israel in Jewish consciousness and the dynamic creativity of Diaspora Jewish life in order to clarify our views concerning the fundamental relationship of contemporary Jewry: the Israel-Diaspora relationship.

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**Readings:**

- |    |  |               |                  |
|----|--|---------------|------------------|
| -- | Tanach,  | Genesis,      | Chapter 12:1-10  |
|    |  |               | Chapter 15:7-21  |
|    |  | Deuteronomy,  | Chapter 24:1-9   |
|    |  |               | Chapter 26:1-6   |
|    |  |               | Chapter 47:28-31 |
|    |  |               | Chapter 8:7-10   |
|    |  |               | Chapter 11:10-13 |
|    |  |               | Chapter 28:1-66  |
|    |  |               | Chapter 30:1-5   |
|    |  | Lamentations, | Chapter 2:5-6    |
|    |  |               | Chapter 5:17-21  |
|    |  | Ezra,         | Chapter 1:1-3    |
|    |  | Esther,       | Chapter 9,10     |
| -- | Mishna Kelim, Chapter 1:6-9 (Adapted excerpts) |               |                  |

- B. Talmud Ketubot, 110b-111b
- J. Talmud Kiddushin, Chapter 1 Halacha 8
- Hoffman, The Land of Israel: Jewish Perspectives, pp. 28, pp. 123-126
- Selections: Theodore Herzl  
Ahad Ha'am  
A.D. Gordon  
Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook
- Avineri & Neusner, "The Proclamation of Independence of the State of Israel"
- Greenberg, The Jewish Way, pp. 373-404
- Schveid, The Land of Israel, pp. 187-198
- Cohen & Mendes-Flohr, Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought, "Essays on Exile and Land of Israel" pp. 219-226; 535-542

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**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. What is the logic in making the land a central component of the covenant -- after all one could imagine other religious systems that do not make territorial claims so central (i.e. Christianity)? Could the covenant work without the land? What is the relationship between the Land and other parts of the Jewish vision (e.g. chosen people)?
2. What makes the Holy Land holy? Is the holiness of the Land intrinsic or instrumental?
3. Is the fact that the majority of the Jewish people (including its leaders and scholars) has lived outside of Israel for most of the past 2,000 years reflect a tragic failure of will or is the Diaspora community a critical part of the vision of the Jewish people?
4. Why were the Jewish people alone of all ancient peoples able to survive as a civilization despite the exile from their land? What accounts for the ability and desire to return to the land after 2,000 years?
5. How would you characterize the relationship between the Israel and American Jewish communities? Is one more central than the other? Are the two equal powers?



6. What are the responsibilities each community has towards the other? What risks do each take for the other?
7. Is the Israel Jewish agenda the same as the North American Jewish agenda? If not, what are the implications for policy decision-making?



WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Dr. Ronald Brauner

Detroit/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

Session #1: MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

Contemporary American domestic life is in turmoil. The tradition of marriage is challenged as perhaps never before. Divorce rates are higher now than at any other time in American history. Domestic stability has always been an outstanding characteristic of Judaism, but Judaism, as a life system, has not had a long experience in an open, democratic society where individual choice and moral and ethical autonomy reign supreme. What insights can Jewish tradition offer in the realm of Marriage and Divorce?

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Readings:

- Mishnah, Qiddushin 1:1-4:14  
(selections indicated with checkmark)
- In re Noghrey, California Court of Appeals, 6/14/85
- Burns v. Burns, New Jersey Superior Court, 12/4/87
- Washington Post, 3/4/88
- The New York Board of Rabbis, 5/5/87, 5/13/87
- American Jewish Committee, Chicago Chapter,  
"Divorce and Jewish Law"

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Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:

1. What aspects of the Jewish tradition regarding marriage seem no longer workable in a society such as ours?
2. Can any accord be found between the traditions regarding Jewish divorce and the growing sense of gender equality in American life?
3. Where does a tradition draw a line and refuse, ultimately, to bend to the demands of "the modern age"?
4. In what ways might marital stability suffer in a secular society?
5. How can marriage and divorce be "Judaized" in modern American life?



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Dr. Ronald Brauner

Detroit/ 1989-1990 Academic Year

Session #2: PARENT-CHILD RELATIONS

Jewish tradition recognizes that relations between parents and children are the most trying, the most difficult and the most frustrating of probably all human relations. Our own experiences would most likely substantiate this view. Some careful consideration of the complexities of parent-child relations through the accumulated wisdom and experience of our tradition can be enlightening.

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Readings:

- Talmud, Qiddushin, 30b-32a
  - Brauner, "Parents and Children"
  - Herring, Jewish Ethics and Halakhah For Our Time  
"Parents and Children", pp. 197-202
- 

Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:

1. How are norms of parent-to-child and child-to-parent relations established?
2. How does one judge whether or not a particular relationship is acceptable?
3. Are there objective criteria for prescribing proper parent-child relations? Can such relations be prescribed?
4. Do different religious systems have different views in this area?
5. Is there a Jewish way to determine proper and acceptable relationships?

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Session #3: TORTS AND BIOETHICAL QUESTIONS

One of the most troubling and complex areas of contemporary concern is Medical Ethics or, more appropriately, Bioethics. There is hardly a family or even an individual in America who is not touched, sometime in his or her life, by difficult questions in this realm. How does one answer -- for himself or for his loved ones? What guidelines are available? How does one know that the right choice is being made? How can one think "Jewishly"? Does it make a difference?

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Readings:

- Mishnah, Bava Qamma 3:1-10; 8:1-7
- Kellner, Contemporary Jewish Ethics,  
"Fetal Experimentation" (Seymour Siegel), pp. 284-295
- Bleich, Contemporary Halakhic Problems,  
"Medical Questions", pp. 93-96

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Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:

1. What is to be understood by the concept "quality of life" and how does Jewish tradition relate to this concept?
2. What is to be understood by the concept "bias for life" and how does the Jewish tradition relate to this concept?
3. What is/should be the understanding of the concept "human dignity" and what should be the legal and social applications of this concept?
4. How can "Pro-Choice" operate in a halakhic environment?
5. To what extent are we prepared to assert that the Noachide Laws should inform Jewish input into American civil and criminal legislation?



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Session #4: DEATH AND MOURNING

People turn to religious systems especially in times of stress and crisis. Many Jews are frustrated by the fact that when the hour of need arises, they are ignorant of what our tradition has to offer by way of guidance and direction. There are many difficult and painful questions associated with death and mourning and it is not unreasonable to expect that Judaism, over the course of 3500 years of experience, should have some valuable and meaningful responses for some of our deepest needs.

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Readings:

- Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, "Mourning", selections from Chapters 1-14
  - Jacob, American Reform Responsa,  
"Mourning Customs", pp. 374-376  
"A Proselyte...", pp. 386-387  
"Christian Relatives...", pp. 390-392
  - Herring, Jewish Ethics and Halakhah For Our Time,  
"Truth and the Dying Patient", pp. 47-65
- 

Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:

1. Does the halakhic system seek to regulate emotion?
2. Why should rules and regulations for procedure be necessary in an area so emotional and so personal as death and mourning?
3. What is the relationship between experience and rationality in the setting of norms of conduct and behavior in life cycle events?
4. How is it possible to "Judaize" death and mourning in the practice of the American Jewish community?

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**Session #5: JEWISH-GENTILE RELATIONS**

From earliest times, the Jewish people have always lived in close association with non-Jews. More often than not, Jews were a minority in the gentile majority culture and we were (and continue to be) faced with the almost daily challenge of determining the degree and scope of our interaction with our neighbors. It seems that we have been consistently confronted with polaric pulls... how to maintain our uniqueness but yet be part of society? How to share and mingle and yet preserve those qualities and characteristics dear to us? How to live a common humanity and yet identify with Jewish religious principles and practices?

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**Readings:**

- Mishnah, Avodah Zarah, 1:1-9; 2:1-3; 3:1-5
- Jacob, American Reform Responsa,  
"Substituting For Christians on Christmas"

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**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. What is civil religion? Should criteria for Jewish involvement be similar to those for sectarian religion?
2. When does defense of one's identity become rejection of community?
3. When does one surrender the particular for the sake of the universal?
4. Are family upbringing and religious education significant factors in determining the nature and degree on interfaith cooperation?



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**Session #6: PLURALISM AND DENOMINATIONS**

Jewish unity has always been a concern of Jewish leadership. Indeed, in order to function effectively, every society needs shared values, a common frame of discourse, and a unified sense of purpose. At the same time, debate, dissent, and diversity of opinions characterize classical Judaism. In modern times, the absence of centralized authority structures, and pluralism of practice as well as belief are facts of Jewish life. Moreover, Jewish diversity has taken the form of distinctive denominations each of which is based on its own fundamental assumptions concerning God, Torah and Jewish peoplehood.

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**Readings:**

- Cohen & Mendes-Flohr, Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought, pp. 91-100, 679-684, 755-759, 767-772
- Pluralism and Passion: Study Guide of the Shalom Hartman Institute
- CLAL Perspectives: "Will There Be One Jewish People in the Year 2000?"; "Judaism, Pluralism and Denominationalism"; "Toward a Principled Pluralism".

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**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

Given that Jewish unity and diversity are both necessary features of Jewish life, consider the following questions:

1. According to classical Jewish sources, what defines an argument as "for the sake of heaven"? Which contemporary controversies fit this category? Which do not?
2. What criteria determine the truthfulness of a debate? Are there considerations which outweigh truth?
3. List the defining features of each movement. In terms of its own self-understanding, what values may each of the movements respect or reject in each of the others?
4. What is the connection between ideological commitment and intolerance?

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**Session #7: WHO'S A JEW?/CONVERSION**

Membership criteria, standards of inclusion and exclusion, for any society depend on how a group understands its foundations and defines overall purpose and its identity. The issue of Who is a Jew?/Conversion is therefore as complex as it is controversial. For ironically, the Jews, the oldest people within Western civilization, now face an identity crisis. The Jews, in the post emancipation world, may be considered an ethnic, religious, national or cultural group. Depending on how one addresses this fundamental question of group definition will determine how one views the Who's a Jew?/Conversion controversy.

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**Readings:**

- Who's a Jew?/Ethnic and Cultural Dimensions of Jewish Identity as Reflected in the Laws of Conversion: Study Guide of the Shalom Hartman Institute
  - Moshe Samet, "Who's A Jew (1958-1988)", in The Jerusalem Quarterly, 36 & 37
- 

**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. What is the formal procedure for conversion in the classical sources. What view of Jewish group belonging is implied by this procedure?
2. If Jewish culture is the basis of Jewish identity, what is the content of Jewish culture? Should Jewish literacy then be required of the convert?
3. If Jewish identity is essentially national, must a Jew become an Israeli citizen?
4. If religion is a defining feature, which beliefs and practices are required?



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**Session #8: THE ETHICS OF POWER**

From the revolt of the Zealots in 66-70 C.E. until recent times, the Jews have functioned in a power vacuum. At the turn of the 20th century, formative European ideologies, such as Zionism, Bundism, socialism and liberalism, attempted to rectify the problem of Jewish vulnerability. Yet, Jewish impotence culminated in the destruction of European Jewry. Virtually overnight, with the dramatic founding of the Third Jewish Commonwealth and the staggering military victory of the Six Day War, the Jews emerged as a formidable political and military force on the world stage. Yet, the very speed with which the Jews moved from powerlessness to power has created a crisis of ideology.

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**Readings:**

- CLAL, "This Land is My Land?": Israel, Judaism, and the Ethics of Power, A Source Book, (Judaic Resource Text)
- Greenberg & Elcott, CLAL Perspectives: Two Views
- Ravitsky, The Roots of Kahanism: Consciousness and Political Reality

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**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

In this new context of Jewish power, consider:

1. Is there a specifically Jewish ethic of war? of peace?
2. How does the Holocaust shape the Jewish attitude toward an exercise of power?
3. How does Jewish power influence a Jewish person's regard for the non-Jew? In Israel? In the Diaspora?
4. Does Jewish power intensify or diminish the Jewish sense of social justice?

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**Session #9: ISRAEL-DIASPORA RELATIONS**

The significance of Israel is a truism of contemporary Jewish life. More than any other single factor, Israel has become the focus of world Jewry and the basis for Jewish unity. Yet, paradoxically, a cardinal tenet of Zionism was the "negation of the Exile", that is, that claim that Jewish life in the Diaspora could not and should not continue. This view, though muted today, still shapes Israeli attitudes toward the Diaspora Jew.

Following World War II, the demographic center of Jewish life shifted from Europe to the United States. American Jewry has since emerged as the largest, most affluent, and arguably most powerful Jewish community in the world.

In this context of well-being, most American Jews reject the "negation of the Exile" not only in practice but in principle. Moreover, many resent Israeli attitudes which strike them as dismissive or seem to diminish the significance of the American Jewish Community.

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**Readings:**

- Israel and Diaspora: A Source Book prepared by the Shalom Hartman Institute
- Mendes-Flohr & Reinharz, The Jew in the Modern World, pp. 330-332, 418-420, 422-427
- Borowitz, The Masks Jews Wear, pp. 151-173
- Hertzberg, Being Jewish In America, pp. 191-230
- Neusner, Stranger at Home: The Holocaust, Zionism, and American Judaism, pp. 99-168



**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. The Zionist claim of the centrality of the Land of Israel is clearly grounded in classical Jewish sources. Yet, Jewish sources attest to the ambiguity of Jewish life in the Land. What are some of the conditions which preclude living in Israel according to the sources? (Compare the Mishnah in Ketubot with later halachic rulings)
2. The Zionist tenet of "negation of the Exile" is based on an analysis of the condition of the Jew in Post-Emancipation Europe. In what ways does this analysis apply to the situation of contemporary American Jews?



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**Session #10: THE ETHICS OF LANGUAGE**

Grounded in the concept of the Covenant, Jewish theology underlines the centrality of inter-dependence, mutuality and interpersonal relationships. Hence, the ethics of language becomes a religious issue. Whether in the marketplace, the public arena, or at home, human relationships are created, cultivated, and destroyed by the capacity to speak and to listen.

The ethics of language is crucial because of the power of speech. The world is created by words, the term Ten Commandments literally translates Ten Utterances, insult is likened to murder, and numerous commandments concern what, how, when, and with whom to speak.

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**Readings:**

- Tanach, Leviticus, Chapter 19:17-18
  - Babylonian Talmud, Baba Metzia 59b  
Yoma 23  
Yevamot 65b  
Shabbat 54b-55a
  - Genesis, Rabba 54
  - Maimonides, Hilchot Deot 2:3, chapters 6-7,  
"Letter to an Inquirer"
  - Hirsch, Horeb, trans. Grunfeld,  
pp. 248-68
-



Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:

1. List those commandments which concern honesty and the prohibition against injuring someone with words. Are these two concerns in conflict?
2. According to Maimonides, list two distinctive functions of the commandment to "reprove". Under what conditions does this commandment apply and not apply?
3. What is the defining principle of Lashon Ha-Rah ("Evil Speech")?



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GENESIS CURRICULUM

Our perceptions of who we are as human beings and Jews begins with the book of Genesis. It deals with such fundamental issues as God, creation, sexually, free will, good and evil, and the chosenness of Israel.

We will explore these and other critical ideas by carefully examining the characters and themes of the Biblical text.

Try to read all the material for each session and pay special attention to the chapters we will cover together in class. After reading each chapter (or unit) ask yourself the following questions: Given that the Bible is very selective in what it chooses to tell us, what is the point of this chapter and why did the Bible include it? Be prepared to answer this question in one sentence or less.

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**Session #1:**      CREATION AND FLOOD  
Genesis, Chapter 1-11:9

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**Readings:**

-- Genesis,      Chapters 1-4  
                 Chapters 6:5 - Chapter 9  
                 Chapter 11:1-9

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**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. What patterns do you see in the sequence of creation?
2. How do the creation stories in Chapter 1 and 2 compare to each other?
3. What is the purpose of the prohibition against eating blood? Why does it appear only after the flood?



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**Session #2:** ABRAHAM AND ISAAC  
Genesis, Chapters 11-25:18

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**Readings:**

-- Genesis, Chapter 11:26-32  
Chapter 12:1-10  
Chapter 15  
Chapter 18:16-33  
Chapter 22  
Chapter 23

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**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. Why did God choose Abraham?
2. How do you understand the symbolism throughout Chapter 15?
3. What is the issue at stake in the discussion between God and Abraham concerning Sodom?
4. What role does Isaac play in Chapter 22?

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Session #3: JACOB  
Genesis, Chapters 25:19-35

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Readings:

-- Genesis, Chapter 25:19-34  
Chapter 27-28:9  
Chapter 28:10-22  
Chapter 29  
Chapter 31  
Chapter 32:23-33  
Chapter 35:9-20

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Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:

1. At what point in Chapter 27 does Isaac know which son is which? Why does it matter?
2. As a person living in a post-Freudian age, how do you understand Jacob's dreams in Chapter 28 and Chapter 32?



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**Session #4:** JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS  
Genesis, Chapters 37-48

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**Readings:**

-- Genesis, Chapters 37-48  
(exclude Chapter 38)

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**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. The Joseph story is the longest one in the book of Genesis and yet God doesn't seem to appear as a character in it. How do you explain this anomaly in Genesis?
2. Pay attention to the actions and words of Reuben and Judah throughout the story. Why do you think these two brothers are singled out?

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**Session #5: THE WOMEN OF GENESIS**

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**Readings:**

- Eve, Chapter 1:26-31  
Chapter 2:4 - Chapter 3
  - Sarah and Hagar, Chapter 12:10-20  
Chapter 16  
Chapter 17:15-22  
Chapter 18:1-15  
Chapter 21:1-21
  - Rebecca, Chapter 24  
Chapter 26:34 - Chapter 27:1-17  
Chapter 27:41-46
  - Rachel & Leah, Chapter 29  
Chapter 30:1-24
  - Tamar, Chapter 38
- 

**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. For each of these women mentioned, choose one phrase which best describes her character or personality. What does she contribute to the story?



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**BIBLICAL NARRATIVE FROM EXODUS TO NUMBERS**

In the five sessions spent learning together, we will examine some of the crucial biblical narratives in our development as a nation: Our shared suffering and redemption; the receiving of the law; the ups and downs of the desert experience; and the challenges to Moses' leadership.

Our concentration will be on a careful reading of the text as we will hone in on specific verses and passages. I would suggest that in your preparation you note the difficult passages or questions that arise as you read the text. Also, it would be helpful to read the material at least twice. Your own critical analysis of the text constitutes one of the major commentaries to be used during class. Other talmudic, midrashic and philosophical material will be handed out by me at the beginning of each session.

The text to be used is The Living Torah, a translation based on traditional Jewish sources with notes, introduction, maps, charts, (etc.) by Aryeh Kaplan.

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**Session #6:** ISRAEL'S ENSLAVEMENT IN EGYPT --  
MOSES EMERGENCE AS NATIONAL LEADER

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**Readings:**

-- Exodus, Chapters 1-6

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**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. What were the factors which motivated Egypt's persecution and enslavement of Israel? Pay particular attention to Exodus, 1:9-10
2. What is the importance in relating the Moses episodes in Exodus, 2:11-22?
3. What is significant in God's revelation to Moses from a thornbush? Exodus, 3:2-4

4. Considering Moses penchant for justice and the downtrodden, how do you understand his refusal to accept God's mission to be a leader of Israel? Exodus, 3:11-16; 4:1-17
5. How do you understand the episode of God's wanting to kill Moses at the inn? Exodus, 4:24-26





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**Session #7: THE PROCESS OF REDEMPTION AND  
ITS MORAL IMPLICATIONS**

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**Readings:**

- Exodus, Chapters 6-12  
Chapter 34

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**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. What was the purpose of the plagues? What theme is consistently emphasized? What other motives are given for specific plagues?
2. What is the purpose of miracles? Are they convincing? Provide proofs for your answer.
3. What was the idea of God in commanding the Israelites to request valuables from the Egyptians before their departure from Egypt? (Exodus, Chapters 3:21-22; 11:2-12; 35; 36)
4. What connection does Shabbat have with the Exodus?
5. What universal lessons does the enslavement in Egypt and our redemption have for us as a people?

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**Session #8: POST REDEMPTION PROBLEMS AND ADJUSTMENTS**

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**Readings:**

- Exodus, Chapter 13:17-21  
Chapter 14:1-31  
Chapter 15:20-27  
Chapter 16  
Chapter 17
- 

**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. Why did God choose the circuitous route for the people? What prompted Egypt's pursuit of the Jews after they had realized the injustice they caused to the Jews?
2. How do you account for the attitude of the Israelites at the Red Sea?
3. What lessons can be learned from the Marah incident?
4. How do you view the miracle of the Manna? Is it a regimen of austerity or affluence?
5. Is Amalek a particular or a universal problem for us as Jews? For mankind as a whole?



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**Session #9:** THE SIN OF THE GOLDEN CALF AND ITS AFTERMATH  
THE BREAKING OF THE TABLETS

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**Readings:**

-- Exodus, Chapter 32  
Chapter 33  
Chapter 34:27-34

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**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. Who was responsible for building of the golden calf?  
What was Aaron's idea and role in the entire incident? Isn't it a bit incongruous for a people who had the high of the divine revelation to sink to such lows?
2. How does Moses react to the people, to Aaron and to God in this episode?
3. Do you think Moses breaking of the tablets was a spontaneous or premeditated action? Was it an act of indignation or a sort of "shock treatment" for the nation?
4. What was the meaning or symbolism of the phenomenon of Moses' radiance and the veil? Where did Michelangelo go wrong?

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**Session #10: CHALLENGES TO MOSES LEADERSHIP**

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**Readings:**

- Numbers, Chapters 11-17.  
Chapter 20:1-13
- 

**Questions and Issues to keep in mind while reading:**

1. What were the causes of the people's complaints and unhappiness? (Numbers, 11:1-11) How do you understand God's response in his promise of meat?
2. Eldad and Medad, rebels or true prophets? How do you understand Joshua's plea to Moses and Moses' response?
3. What was Miriam's complaint against Moses? Wasn't she correct and doesn't her punishment seem overly severe?
4. Where did the spies go wrong?
5. Was the decree of God upon the people overkill? To what extent was Moses successful in his intervention on behalf of the people?
6. What do you think motivated Korach in his rebellion against Moses and Aaron?
7. How do you understand Moses and Aaron's sin at the Rock (Numbers, 20:1-13) and God's subsequent punishment?