

Rocking the Boat

Lessons about Reforming from the Pharisees and the Tannaim

A Curriculum by
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Summary of Lessons

1. (Introduction) Rocking the Boat: Changes Throughout Jewish History

Learners will examine how Judaism has evolved and adapted throughout Jewish history. They will begin the lesson by looking at the pentateuchal commandment: “do not add anything to what I am commanding you. And do not subtract from it.” In being introduced to the metaphor of Jewish history as a rope, they will examine different strands of Judaism and see how they are all interconnected. They will see where Pharisaic Judaism and Tannaitic Judaism and contemporary Reform fall in the scheme of Jewish history.

Texts for Study

Deuteronomy 4:1-2

Pirke Avot 5:22

2. Old School Judaism: Monolotry, Sacrifice, and The Temple

In order to understand how contemporary Judaism is different from early models of religious theology, this session will explore monolotry, Sacrifices and the Temple. Learners will look at the way Israelite characters acknowledge the existence of other gods, and even at times worship foreign gods such as Ba'al. Learners will study how sacrifice was carried out, and the learn how Israelites used this practice in order to worship God. Lastly, learners will explore the theocratic nature of the priesthood and Temple practice. After learning about these ancient practices, they will try to relate how modern Judaism relates to them

Texts for Study

Psalms 82:1

Exodus 13:17

Deuteronomy 32:8

Leviticus 3:1-3

3. Long Live the Revolution: The Pharisees

The Pharisees revolutionized the way the way Jews practiced Judaism. This class will look at the way the Pharisees instituted new practices and new theological concepts, and challenged the traditional norms previously set by the theocratic Temple culture. Learners will explore the innovation of Oral Law, the concept of resurrection of the dead, and new customs that the Pharisees introduced into Jewish practice.

Texts for Study

Josephus, Antiq. XIII. 15, 17

Mishnah Avot 1:1-3

Mishnah Yoma 19b

Yad 4:6

Josephus, Antiquities XIII: 297

Josephus, WarII, 119-66

Acts 23: 6-8

Mark 7:1-5

Matthew 23: 1-3, 6-7

4. Out into the Countryside: Moving from Jerusalem to Yavneh

In this lesson learners will study the events leading up to the destruction of the Temple, and will explore what it was like for Jews to begin to cope with destruction. Students will be emerged in the experience of destruction by attempting to paint a picture of how they would cope if our synagogue (Temple) system was suddenly destroyed. Learners will read the legend of Jochanan ben Zakai's move to Yavneh, and will begin to talk about how the Tannaim adapted to life without a Temple.

Texts for Study

Josephus, War 5:14,19-20

B. Git 56a-b

Rosh HaShana 4:1-2

5. No Temple No Problem: Innovations in the Mishnah

Learners will learn discuss the concept of a takkanah, an amendment to the practice of Jewish law. The takkanot that the Tannaim instituted after the destruction of the Temple enabled the Jews to survive without the Temple cult. Learners will study takkanot in relation to the way the American constitution is amended. The takkanot of the Tannaim will exemplify the necessity of change to Jewish practice.

Texts to Study

Yoma 29a

Rosh HaShana 4.4

15th Amendment of the United States Constitution

b. Sota 41a

b.Ker 9a

6. Ancient reforms and Reform: Applying Old Wisdom to Contemporary American Reform Judaism

In this final lesson, learners will look at the way that some of the pioneers of the Reform movement used the model of the Pharisees and the Tannaim in order to initiate

contemporary reforms. Learners will reflect upon what they have learned in previous lessons and apply it to the way that they practice Judaism.

Texts to Study

Talmud and Reform (Samuel Holdheim)

Essential Questions and Enduring Understandings

Essential Questions

- How do the issues of identity from the past reflect contemporary issues of Reform Jewish identity?
- What do the ancient changes made to Judaism tell us about the changing nature of Jewish identity?
- What does rabbinic literature tell us about Jewish identity?
- How do past changes made to Judaism reflect the changes made to Judaism by the Reform Movement.

Enduring Understandings

- Changes to Judaism are necessary in order to ensure survival.
- Just as the Pharisees and Tannaim found ways to adapt to challenges, so too must our contemporary communities find ways to innovate.
- We can apply and transfer much of the ancient understanding and wisdom of Jewish identity into modern times.
- Adaptation and Innovation are authentic expressions of Jewish history.

Assessment

Learner Outcomes

- Learners will understand some of the roots of Judaism and be able to use this to understand their own identity.
- Learners will feel that their form of Judaism is authentic
- Learners will know how Judaism has been able to redefine itself after based on necessity, and will be able to see how this pattern emerges in other periods of history.
- Learners will articulate connections between the Jews of the past and themselves, and will be able to find authenticity in their own modern identities.
- Learners will be able to identify key rabbinic terms such as: midrash, halacha, Chazal, Mishnah, Talmud, Pharisee, Sadducee, Avodah, ect.

Evidence of Understanding

This curriculum is designed for a class of adult learners in an informal setting, and thus the tools for assessment do not include quizzes, tests, or papers. In place of these formal methods for student assessment, more informal methods for evaluating understanding should be used. Performance tasks will be integrated into the lessons so that students can learn by doing.

The teacher will also assess students using a set of open-ended critical questions that will be built into the lessons. These academic prompts will ensure that students are able to reflect upon the material, and engage it academically and creatively. Lastly, students will be assessed through weekly journal entries. Each

entry will prompt students with questions that will authentically assess their understanding of each unit by leading students to reflect on how the material relates to their own reformist identity.

Rationale

The Jewish people have constantly been reshaping their identity throughout their 4000 year history. While we still bear the name of the ancient tribe of Judah, we are no longer the same people. Judaism in its current form hardly resembles its ancient original appearance. The best image that seems to describe the way Judaism has been transformed throughout the centuries is that of a rope. None of the fibers at the beginning of the rope are the same as those at the end, yet they as each strand overlaps and twists together, they form a continuous link that forms an unbroken rope.¹ Throughout this rope of Jewish history, innovation and reform appear as consistent and authentic paradigms.

While Judaism is a tradition of change, many Americans are still uncomfortable with Reform practice. For the vast majority of American Jews, authentic Judaism is associated with Orthodoxy and a convention that change goes against the grain of tradition. Orthodoxy has become so normative, that it has become the standard by which we as Reform Jews often measure our own Jewish practice. For example, it has become common for people to say “I go to services on Friday night, but I am not Shomer Shabbat.” When asked about being Jewish, why is a common reply “yes, *but* I’m Reform?” Or why is Reform Judaism so often a self-labeled as “Judaism light?” It is hard to gauge our discomfort accurately though statistics because it is difficult for Reform Jews to admit that they have such feelings about themselves. Some statistics from the NJPS point in this direction, however. Only 56 percent of Reform Jews agree that “I have

¹ Michael Meyer, *Judaism within Modernity: Essays on Jewish History and Religion* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001), 95-96.

a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people,” and only 71 percent strongly agree “I have a clear sense of what being Jewish means to me.”² A healthy sense of identity requires a positive view of the self. It is of the utmost importance that we aim to create this positive self-image, because the result of formulating negative notions of one’s personal group often leads to group desertion.³ It is not enough that people see themselves as Jewish; it is important that they develop a favorable opinion of their own Jewish identity if we are to survive as a people, and as a movement in particular. It is therefore important to create curricula that help Reform Jews develop a self-understanding and a favorable image of their own Jewish identities. One main goal of this curriculum, *Rabbinic Innovations and Reforms*, is therefore to enable Reform Jews to develop healthy images of their Jewish selves.

Another important aspect of adult Jewish education, as Lisa Grant and Diane Tickton Schuster have argued, is to make new meaning of preexisting Jewish activity.

Throughout our lives, we look for ways to understand our experiences and to cope with things that are confusing, frightening, or hard to accept. Religious education provides valuable structures that help people to acquire and deepen meaning in their lives.⁴

² Jonathon Ament, “American Jewish Religious Denominations,” *United Jewish Communities Report Series of the National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01* (February 2005), 20.

³ The British social psychologist Henri Tajfel labels this “exit.” Exit, according to Tajfel means moving out a group that creates negative social identity. Roger Brown, *Social Psychology, the Second Edition* (New York: Free Press), 560.

⁴ Dianne Tickton Schuster and Lisa D. Grant, “Teaching Jewish Adults,” in Nachama Skolnik Moskowitz, *The Ultimate Jewish Teacher’s Handbook* (Denver: A.R.E. Publishing Inc., 2003), 154

Adults strive for “intelligibility and purpose,” seeking a “perspective of framework for our being-in-the world,” noted Leon McKenzie.⁵ The same can be said for Reform adult learners within congregations. They seek to find meaning within their preexisting Reform identities. Another goal of this curriculum is thus to help Reform Jews examine what it means to be a Reform Jew, and see why reform and innovation, the crux of our movement, is an authentic form of Jewish tradition.

In understanding the framework for what it means to be a Reform Jew, it is essential to understand the historical bases for reforms and innovations. The contemporary paradigm of reform that is the foundation for our movement today is demonstrated throughout Jewish history; the most significant and meaningful example of which was carried out by the early rabbis. The changes that the Pharisees and Tannaim made during the Second Commonwealth and subsequently after the destruction of the Second Temple represent some of the most drastic and important reformations of Judaism in history. Like contemporary Reform, these Jews revolutionized Jewish practice and Jewish identity. By creating the Oral Law, the Pharisees pioneered new traditions that helped Jews transition from a culture of Temple cult, to a people-centered religion of study and law. They changed the structure of Judaism by shifting the authority from the priestly class to the Jewish people. The Tannaim continued this legacy of change in the wake of the destruction of the Temple. They created new innovations to Jewish practice that would enable Judaism to survive without the Temple. Primarily, they implemented prayer as the central component of Jewish worship in place of Temple sacrifice. By

⁵ Quoted in IBID.

learning about the changing nature of Judaism, particularly through the lens of the early rabbis, we can better understand why religious reform is necessitated today and in the future. Adults who engage in this material through a curriculum designed to help them reflect on their own Reform practice will come to not only appreciate Jewish history, but they will also begin to find authenticity in their own Reform Jewish practice.

When Reform Jewish adults find their religious practice authentically Jewish, their commitment to Jewish education will be heightened, and they will develop more favorable views of their Jewish self-image. By studying the lessons of the rabbis through history and through rabbinic literature, Reform Jewish adults can learn a great deal about what it means to be a Reform Jew, and how religious reform is grounded within Jewish tradition. Studying this era of the past will, in turn, help Jewish adults understand their identity in the present.

Letter to Teacher

Dear Teacher,

To understand who we are as Reform Jews, it is often necessary to look at where we have come from. One of the problems that Reform Jewish education does not always address has been the role history has played in forming how we see ourselves as Jews living in the modern world, and as Reform Jews in particular. Looking at history enables us to see important patterns, understand interesting characters who influenced our lives today, and to see ourselves reflected in the past. This curriculum seeks to help Reform Jewish adults do just this.

By looking at the Pharisees and the Tannaim, we see two very important interrelated groups of Jews who changed the course of Jewish history with new innovations to Jewish practice and Jewish theology. Not only did these breakthroughs change Judaism radically, but they also are reflected in contemporary Jewish practice. We gain a lot insight about ourselves from understanding who these people were.

This curriculum explores the changes to Judaism that the Pharisees and the Tannaim made in six sessions. Each session is planned for an hour and a half, but there are certain sessions that can easily be extended and run longer if you choose. The classes are meant to be very hands on. While there is time for teachers to talk and lecture, it is also important for students to work on their own with the given texts and through the exercises so that they can develop textual skills and reflect on the material.

I created this curriculum through an understanding of history from the perspective of a Reform Jewish historian. The curriculum therefore approaches history with a fusion between religion and scientific critical historiography. If you are a teacher who is not Reform or are non-Religious, you may have trouble relating to it. Every teacher who does use this curriculum, however, will surely approach it with his or her own style, experience, and assumptions. There are many places in which you as the teacher can add to the lessons, or even subtract. For resources that will help you better understand or add to the curriculum, look at the resource list. Good Luck!

בהצלחה

Josh Franklin

Annotated Resources

Cohen, Martin A. *Two sister faiths: introduction to a typological approach to early rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity.* [Worcester, MA]: [Assumption College], 1985.

Martin Cohen's brief historical overview of the early period of rabbinic Judaism and the time leading up to it is a good source to give to students who want to read a historical background of the time period that this curriculum encompasses.

Coogan, Michael David. *The Oxford history of the biblical world.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2001.

For teachers and students who want to read both articles that give overviews of specific periods, key events, and people, this book is a great resource that will provide readers a collection of articles that are arranged to cover the ancient Jewish world chronologically.

Rivkin, Ellis. *A hidden revolution: The Pharisees Search for the Kingdom Within.* Nashville: Abingdon, 1978.

Ellis Rivkin's groundbreaking book on the Pharisees utilizes texts from Josephus, The New Testament and Rabbinic Literature in order to portray the Pharisees as a revolutionary group that provided a theological underpinning of the Hasmonean Revolution and theologically and politically undermined the Ahronide priestly system. The book is filled with texts that can be used as resources, and it also provides a great comprehensive understanding for teachers and students of the Pharisees.

Schiffman, Lawrence H. *Texts and traditions: a source reader for the study of Second Temple and rabbinic Judaism.* Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Pub. House. 1998

This anthology is a collection of primary source documents that can be very helpful in finding texts for the class. The book is arranged chronologically and by subject and contains translations of texts from Josephus, Philo, New Testament, Rabbinic Literature, and more. The editor, Lawrence Shiffman, introduces each piece with background and material that is helpful for both teachers and students.

Lesson 1- (Introduction) Rocking the Boat: Changes Throughout Jewish History

Note: Parts in blue are meant to be used as texts for classroom distribution

Parts in red are meant to be used as lecture style notes for the teacher

Parts in italics are suggested answers to questions posed to the class

Core Concepts:

- Judaism has been constantly changing throughout Jewish history

Learner Outcomes

- Students will be able to visualize and put into perspective when the pharisaic and rabbinic periods of Judaism were in Jewish history
- Students will begin to believe that their reformist religion is an authentic tradition of Jewish history
- Students will learn the names of their classmates and begin to develop a social relationship with them
-

Timetable

0-:15 – Introductions

:15-30- Set Induction

:30-45- Seeing Jewish History as a Rope

:45-50 – Coffee Break

:50- 1:15- Looking at an Outline of Jewish History

1:15-1:30- Wrap Up

Introductions:

The instructor will ask students to each introduce themselves with their name, fun fact about themselves, and favorite biblical character.

Set Induction:

After students have introduced themselves, the instructor will introduce the class by first having them reflect upon a text from the Torah. Students will be given a handout with the text (Text#1 Deuteronomy 4:1-2), and asked to write down their thoughts about this text:

Deuteronomy 4:1-2

Now Israel, Listen to the statutes and ordinances that I have taught you to do *Do not add anything to what I am commanding you. And do not subtract from it.* Observe all of the commandments of Adonai your God that I am commanding you!

וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁמַע אֶל־הַחֻקִּים וְאֶל־הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְלַמֵּד
אֵתְכֶם... לֹא תִסְפוּ עַל־הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מִצְוֶה אֶתְכֶם וְלֹא תִגְרְעוּ מִמֶּנּוּ
לְשֹׁמֵר אֶת־מִצְוֹת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מִצְוֶה אֶתְכֶם

Guided Questions:

1. How do you think we should understand this commandment?
2. How do you think Ultra-Orthodox Jews have dealt with this section of the Torah?
How should we as Reform Jews look at this commandment?
3. How do you feel about reading this commandment literally? Do you feel that there is any other way that we can interpret it?
4. In what ways do you think Judaism the same/different as it was when the Torah was written (interpret the origins of the Torah in any way you like)?

These questions are meant to spark the idea that our perception of religion has changed from the time of the Deuteronomic inception of this law. Even the most contemporary Orthodox Jews have altered, added to, and subtracted from the commandments of the Torah. Looking through history, we see that it is impossible to see a literal application of this commandment.

Seeing Jewish History as a Rope

Instructor introduces the rope paradigm

How old is our religious tradition? If we see Abraham as the source of our religious faith, as our forefather (and Sara as our foremother), Judaism would be approximately 4000

years old. While the Jewish tradition considers him our patriarch, his religious practice and theology was far different than ours today. He made sacrifices, he was polygamous, he had no Torah, he was not bound to kashrut, and he did not pray in the same way we do so today! Moses's religious practice was very different from Abraham's, yet there were things in common. By the time of Solomon, a Temple cult was established; religious practice is more than not dissimilar from that of Abraham. So what links us to the religion of the past? Is there anything constant?

(leave room for class response)

The historian Michael Meyer offers us an interesting metaphor to understand the link that connects us. He outlines Jewish history as that of a rope. None of the fibers at the beginning of the rope are the same as those at the end, yet they are still connected and bound together to form one linked history.

(Using a projector, display the diagram on bellow onto the board. Or use handouts to distribute this image)

Jewish History as a Rope

The original stands of Jewish history at the time of Abraham are linked to our own, but they are not the same.

Faith of Abraham
4000 BCE

Contemporary
Judaism
2010 CE



Questions:

1. In what ways do you feel linked to the generation before you? In what ways do you feel disconnected from the generation before you?
2. What aspects or types of Jewish thought do you know of that could be representative of any strand on this rope of Jewish history?

Examples: Karraitic Judaism, Sadduceic Judaism, Kabbalah, Zionism, Messianism, Sacrificial Worship, ect.

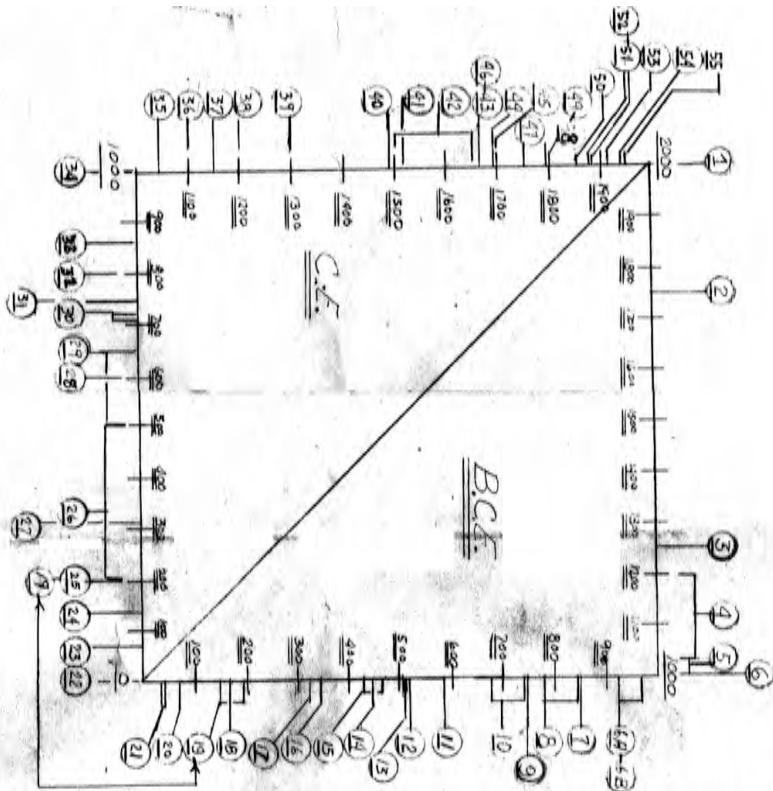
Looking at an Outline of Jewish History

This 6-session course will focus in on one of the most radical and interesting transformations in Jewish history. We will be looking at the rabbinic transformation of Judaism from 2nd Temple Period Judaism to Rabbinic Judaism; a Judaism of Temple-centered cultic sacrificial worship, to a people-centered Judaism of prayer and mitzvot. This is the most significant transformation of Jewish practice in the history of Judaism. If we think back to our rope metaphor, this would be a shift where many strands of the rope would become severed, and many new strands would begin. As we look today and throughout the course at how the rabbis of this time reformed Judaism, we should take their example to heart as we consider ways in which we as Reform Jews today adapt our own tradition for the future. Through understanding this group historically, we can better understand ourselves as Reform Jews.

In order to begin to understand this revolutionary reformation, I want us to look first at where this period fits into a grander scale of Jewish history.

(A projection of the digital powerpoint Appendix 1D should be shown on a screen. A hard copy with a more complete outline of Jewish history as seen below should also be distributed)

A Framed View of Jewish History



- C.E. COMMON ERA**
- 1-2000 Abraham
 - 2-1050 Joseph in Egypt
 - 3-1250 Exodus...Ten Commandments
 - 4-1200-1250 The Judges
 - 5-1120-1200 Saul
 - 6-1000 David
 - 6A-961-922 Solomon
 - 6B-922 Kingdom Divided
 - 7-850 Elijah
 - 8-850-786 Elisha
 - 9-750 Amos
 - 10-750-675 Isaiah I
 - 11-586 Jerusalem & Temple destroyed & Exile
 - 12-538 Cyrus allows Jews to return
 - 13-520-515 Temple rebuilt by Zerubabel
 - 14-450 Ezra
 - 15-450-430 Golden Age of Greece
 - 16-350 Aristotle
 - 17-333 Alexander the Great conquers Jewish
 - 18-165 Maccabean Revolt
 - 19-150-200 CE Tannaitic Period... Mishna developed
 - 20-63 Roman rule begins
 - 21-70 BCE-4CE Herod the Great
 - 22-0 Jesus
- C.E. COMMON ERA**
- 23-70 Temple destroyed
 - 24-135 Bar-Kochba's Rebellion
 - 25-200 Rabbi Judah the Prince
 - 26-200-900 Amoraim Period... Gemara evolving
 - 27-315 Constantine the Great
 - 28-600 Mohamed
- C.E. COMMON ERA**
- 29-500-650 Sassanians
 - 30-711-715 Muslim conquest of Spain
 - 31-740 Khazars convert to Judaism
 - 32-800 Charlemagne
 - 33-860 Aaron
 - 34-1000 Rashi
 - 35-1040 Ibn Gairol
 - 36-1100Yehuda Halevi, First Crusade
 - 37-1150 Palmonides, Second Crusade
 - 38-1200 Richard the Lion-Heart
 - 39-1300 The Zohar
 - 40-1492 Expulsion of the Jews from Spain
 - 41-1500-1650 Golden Age of Polish Jewry
 - 42-1517 Martin Luther
 - 43-1565 Shulchan Aruch
 - 44-1648 Chmelnicxi
 - 45-1656 readmission of Jews to England & Sphora
 - 46-1665 Shabbetai Tera
 - 48-1790 Birth of Reform
 - 47-1754 Moses Mendelssohn
 - 49-1791 Pale of Settlement Established
 - 50-1850 Rise of German Immigration to U.S.
 - 51-1875 Founding of Hebrew Union College
 - 52-1880 Rise of mass Immigration from Europe
 - 53-1917 Balfour Declaration
 - 54-1940-1945 Holocaust
 - 55-1948 Israel

Instructor should walk the class through the different periods of Jewish history explaining where significant changes take place, and pointing out where major figures of Jewish history fall on the square. This chart is designed with both visual and audio cues in order to enable students to absorb and visualize the context of the 2nd Temple, its destruction, and the rabbinic period that followed.

Instructor should be sure to point out the time periods in which Temples stood, The Hasmonean Dynasty, Herod, Destruction of the 2nd Temple, Tannaitic Period, Amoraic Period, Gaonic Period, ect.

Wrap Up:

Instructor should reintroduce the initial verse from the set induction. The class should break up into chevrotah pairs and work on the following task:

Imagine yourselves as rabbinical commentators on this verse. Write your own commentary that interprets this verse in a way that makes it applicable to your lives. Add your own stipulations and explanations taking into consideration the class discussion. Each pair should share their piece with the group. The instructor should wrap up with his own interpretation, and or should bring in the following text:

Pirke Avot 5:22

5:22 Ben Bag Bag used to say, "Turn it, and turn it, for everything is in it. Reflect on it and grow old and gray with it.

בן בג בג אומר הפך בה והפך בה דכולא בה

As Ben Bag Bag taught, we can find new and enlightened meanings within the text if we reflect upon it. As we continue on a tradition of reforming Judaism, we may not be adding or subtracting from the teachings of the Torah, but we are interpreting and reinterpreting; turning it, and turning it again. Our tradition is ever-turning; we are linked

to the same tradition as the past, but we have come to find new meanings from our tradition.

Journal entry for the next class:

In what ways have you adapted your own religious practice and or Jewish lifestyle in order to make it relevant for you life? How do you feel these changes have made you more or less Jewish?

Lesson 3- Long Live the Revolution: The Pharisees

Note: Parts in blue are meant to be used as texts for classroom distribution

Parts in red are meant to be used as lecture style notes for the teacher

Parts in italics are suggested answers to questions posed to the class

Core Concepts:

The Pharisees were a group who brought about revolutionary change

Oral Law was one of the biggest revolutions to Judaism ever!

Learner Outcomes:

Students will see the Pharisaic Revolution as movement for innovation to Judaism.

Students will be able to identify the origins of their Jewish practice with the precedent of the Pharisees

Students will understand how the Pharisees changed the nature of Judaism

Time Table

00:- 0:20 - Set Induction

0:20:- 0:30 - Oral Law

00:30- 1:10 - The Pharisees and the Sadducees

1:10- 1:25 - Debate between the Pharisees and the Sadducees

1:25-1:30 - Conclusion

Set Induction:

Pass Out Mishnah Avot 1:1-4 and have students read together as a class

The Tannaim wrote in the Mishnah that:

1. Moses received the (Oral) Torah from Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua; Joshua to the elders; the elders to the prophets; and the prophets handed it down to the men of the Great Assembly. They said three things: Be deliberate in judgment, raise up many disciples, and make a fence around the Torah.

2. Shimon the Righteous was one of the last survivors of the Great Assembly. He used to say: On three things the world is sustained: on the Torah, on the (Temple) service, and on deeds of loving kindness.

3. Antigonus of Socho received the Torah from Shimon the Righteous. He used to say: Be not like servants who minister unto their master for the sake of receiving a reward, but be like servants who serve their master not upon the condition of receiving a reward; and let the fear of Heaven be upon you.

4. Yosi ben Yoezer of Tzeredah and Yosi ben Yochanan of Jerusalem received the Torah from them. Yosi ben Yoezer of Tzeredah said: Let your house be a meetinghouse for the sages and sit amid the dust of their feet and drink in their words with thirst.

א,א משה קיבל תורה מסיני, ומסרה ליהושוע, ויהושוע לזקנים, וזקנים לנביאים, ונביאים מסרוה לאנשי כנסת הגדולה. והן אמרו שלושה דברים: היו מתונים בדין, והעמידו תלמידים הרבה, ועשו סייג לתורה.

א,ב שמעון הצדיק היה משיירי אנשי כנסת הגדולה. הוא היה אומר, על שלושה דברים העולם עומד--על התורה, ועל העבודה, ועל גמילות החסדים.

א,ג אנטיגנוס איש סוכו קיבל משמעון הצדיק. הוא היה אומר, אל תהיו כעבדים המשמשין את הרב, על מנת לקבל פרס, אלא הוו כעבדים המשמשין את הרב, על מנת שלא לקבל פרס; ויהי מורא שמיים עליכם.

א,ד יוסי בן יועזר איש צרידה ויוסף בן יוחנן איש ירושלים קיבלו ממנו. יוסי בן יועזר איש צרידה אומר, יהי ביתך בית ועד לחכמים; והוי מתאבק בעפר רגליהם, ושותה בצמא את דבריהם.

Having studied Theocratic Judaism last week, what might we have expected would have been recorded differently?

There is no inclusion of the Priests. We might imagine that the tradition would go from Moses to Aaron, and from Aaron to his sons, ect. Instead, this tradition is passed on through Joshua, to the elders, to the prophets, ect. Non of those involved in this chain are priests!

Where do we find it in the Torah? In Prophets? In Ketuvim?

The oral law, Torah Sh'Baal Peh is never mentioned even once in any biblical literature. We clearly know about the written law, that is, the Torah. Oral Law is simply not mentioned or alluded to. The only evidence that it might date earlier than we currently imagine is that it was only transmitted orally and was forbidden to be written down.

We opened this course with the commandment from Deuteronomy 4:1-2: Now Israel, Listen to the statutes and ordinances that I have taught you to do *Do not add anything to what I am commanding you. And do not subtract from it.* Observe all of the commandments of Adonai your God that I am commanding you! Do you think that Oral Law would violate this?

The Rabbis believed that since Oral Law was given at Sinai, it was a part of the holy set of commandments that Jews should obey. Moreover, since the laws were not written, only transmitted orally, their existence does not undermine the commandment. .

The Oral Law

According to a traditional understand, Oral Law is the unwritten commentary on the Torah that explains how the commandments should be carried out. The Oral Law, as we see above, has been believed to have been given to Moses at Sinai along with the Torah, and meant to be a supplement to the written law that he received. For Example: The Oral Law will elaborate on what it means to “Remember Shabbat and Keep it Holy.” The Torah tells us that on Shabbat we are not allowed to kindle fire, chop down a tree, plow or harvest. The Oral Law would add stipulations based on this commandment including restrictions against mixing on Shabbat, the prohibition against writing on Shabbat ect. There are also many orally based laws and customs that aren’t derived from any reference in the Torah! They stand apart completely from any written tradition. Most likely, they derive from community customs that become so traditional that after generations they became equivalent in importance to written commandments.

The Oral Law, moreover, includes more than just laws. The Oral Law encompasses a tradition that asserts many new theological stipulations that are not present or explicitly discussed in the Torah. This includes the resurrection of the dead, the coming of the Messiah, the eternalness of the human soul. Moreover, the Oral Law incorporates wisdom literature such as Pirke Avot (the Tradition of the Fathers).

While it is a nice idea to believe that Oral Law is Torah Mi'Sinai, historically, we know better. As we mentioned, there is no evidence of it's existence in any Israelite, Jewish, or foreign source before it's initial mention in reference to a historical group of people. As we shall see, this group is not only associated with Oral Law, they created it. This group revolutionized Judaism by creating a whole new system of practice in addition to the commandments of the Torah and practices within the Temple. This group was the Pharisees.

The Pharisees and the Sadducees

Just as there are now different denominations of Judaism, so too in the time of the Maccabees AKA the Hasmoneans (165 BCE) were there different sects of Judaism. New streams of thought were emerging, some of which challenged the foundations of the Temple Cult run by the Ahronide family class. We learned last week about the Temple Cult and the Zaddokite Priesthood; this group will be seen today by the name Sadducees, stemming from the same line of practice, class, and power. We will see them in comparison to the Pharisees, a revolutionary group that brought about new customs and practices, helped bring about a new system of Jewish practice in Judea. They were a stream who pioneered oral law and brought power back to the people and away from the Priests. The Pharisees contended against the Sadducees, who were the Priestly class of Jews.

Have the class read the following text together as they begin to build an understanding of who the Pharisees were as a revolutionary group, and how they differed from the traditional practice of the Sadducees.

Josephus, Antiquities XIII: 297

I wish merely to explain that the Pharisees had transmitted to the people certain laws handed down from the Fathers which are not written down in the laws of Moses, and for this reason are rejected by the group of Sadducees, who say only the written laws are to be taught.

	Old School (Sadducees)	New School (Pharisees)
Oral Law		

	Old School (Sadducees)	New School (Pharisees)
Belief in Afterlife		
Political Power		
Fate		
Immortality of the Soul		
How they Worshipped		

Break Class up into three groups and distribute three sets of texts. Using the texts, have learners write what they know about the Pharisees from the texts and fill in the chart above with the knowledge that they can extrapolate from their text. Each group of texts is successively more difficult. You may want to work on the last set of texts as one group. After each group is finished. Compile a list on the board of what we know the Sadducees and the Pharisees representing the old style of practice, and the Pharisees, representing the new style.

Group 1: Texts From Josephus (Easy to Understand)

Josephus, War II, 119-66

Of the two first-named schools, the Pharisees are those who are considered most skillful in the exact explication of their laws, and are the leading school. They ascribe all fate to God, and yet allow that to do what is right, or the contrary, is the principally in the the power of men, although fate does not cooperate in every action. they say that all souls are imperishable, but that the souls of good men only pass into other bodies while the souls of evil men are subject to eternal punishment

But the Sadducees are those that compose the second order and exclude fate entirely, and suppose that God is not concerned with our doing or not doing what is evil. They say that to do what is good or what is evil is men's own choice, and that the choice of one or the other belongs to each person who may act as he pleases.

They also exclude the belief in the immortality of the soul and the punishments and rewards of the underworld.

Josephus, Antiquities XVIII 15, 17

[The Pharisees have very great influences with the masses, and whatever they do about divine worship, or prayers, or sacrifices, they perform in accordance with their own interpretation . . . [The views of the Sadducees] are received by only a few, but these are of the highest rank. But they are hardly able to do anything so to speak, for when they become magistrates, as they are unwillingly and by force sometimes obliged to do, they conform to the teachings of the Pharisees, because the populace would not otherwise put up with them.

Group 2: Texts from the New Testament (Hard)

Matthew 23: 1-3, 6-7

The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses's seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach but do not practice . . . they love the place of honor at the feast and the best seats in the synagogues and salutations in the market places, and being called rabbi by men

Acts 23: 6-8

But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead I am on trial." And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. for the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.

Mark 7:1-5

Now when the Pharisees gathered together to him with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, they saw that some of Jesus's disciples ate with hands defiled, that is, unwashed. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they wash their hands, observing the Oral Law; and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they purify themselves; and there are many other traditions which they observe, the washing of cups and pots and vessels of

bronze.) And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not walk according to the Oral Law, but eat with defiled hands.”

Group 3: Texts from Rabbinic Literature (Harder)

Yoma 19B

Our rabbis have taught: “it was related of a Sadducee [High Priest] that he prepared [the incense] outside [the Holy of Holies] and then entered. When he came out he was extremely happy. His father met him and said to him, ‘My son, although we are Sadducees we fear the Pharisees.’”

תנו רבנן: מעשה בצדוקי אחד שהתקין מבחוץ והכניס. ביציאתו היה שמח שמחה גדולה. פגע בו אביו, אמר לו: בני, אף על פי שצדוקין אנו – מתיראין אנו מן הפרושים

Mishnah Yadayim 4:6,8

(The Pharisees ruled that Holy Scriptures defiled one's hands. They created this ruling, it seems, in order to make sure that the Priests could not handle Torah Scrolls and any other Holy Scriptures without making themselves unfit to carry out the priestly duties)

The Sadducees say: “We complain against you, Pharisees, for you say that the Holy Scriptures defile the hands, but the writings of Homer (i.e. The Iliad and the Odyssey) do not defile the hands.”¹

Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai said: “And do we hold only this against the Pharisees? Behold they say: ‘the bones of an ass are pure and the bones of Yochanan the high priest are impure.’”²

He said to them: “So too, regarding the Holy Scriptures, their impurity is according to (our) love for them; so that no one should make the bones of his mother and father into spoons.”

¹ It was required for the priests to wash their hands after they had touched anything that was a part of the Holy Scriptures that were a part of the Biblical Canon

² According to Jewish law, the Cohanim, the priestly class are not allowed to touch corpses or even be in their presence. This is why those who are Cohanim today are considered not to be allowed to enter cemeteries.

He said to them: "So too, regarding the Holy Scriptures, their impurity is according to (our) love for them. But the books of Homer, which are not beloved do not defile the hands.

משנה מסכת ידים פרק ד משנה ו

אומרים צדוקים קובלין אנו עליכ' פרושים שאתם אומרים כתבי הקודש מטמאין את הידים וספרי הומריס אינו מטמא את הידים א"ר יוחנן בן זכאי וכי אין לנו על הפרושים אלא זו בלבד הרי הם אומרים עצמות חמור טהורים ועצמות יוחנן כהן גדול טמאים אמרו לו לפי חבתן היא טומאתן שלא יעשה אדם עצמות אביו ואמו תרודות אמר להם אף כתבי הקדש לפי חבתן היא טומאתן וספרי הומריס שאינן חביבין אינן מטמאין את הידים:

	Old School (Sadducees)	New School (Pharisees)
Oral Law	The Pharisees rejected Oral Law. They believed that only the written law was valid	The Sadducees believed that in addition to the written law, Oral Law was received from God and Sinai, and passed down from generation to generation
Belief in Afterlife	Believed that there is no afterlife	Believed that when the Messiah would come, there would be a new age in which the dead were resurrected
Political Power	Controlled the Temple and the priesthood. They were the aristocracy	Had influence over the masses. Had influence within the Temple, and sometimes over the priesthood
Fate	Things are determined by what we do, there is no fate	All things are predetermined by fate
Immortality of the Soul	The soul dies with the body	The soul is immortal and lives on after death

	Old School (Sadducees)	New School (Pharisees)
How they Worshipped	The Temple Cult	Worshipped through sacrifice, but also carried out prayer and ritual practice within the synagogues.

A Pharisee and Sadducee Debate

Break the class up into two groups. Have one side be Pharisees, and have the other side be the Sadducees. As a moderator, have the students debate with each other on the following questions.

1. How can the average Jew practice Judaism?
2. Why should we worship God?
3. Who should have control over Jewish practices?
4. Does being Jewish involve more than just the written Torah?
5. Can there be Judaism outside the Temple?

Conclusion:

It should be pretty obvious that for us Jews today our theology is more like the Pharisees than the Sadducees. We should also see that Reform Judaism changed Judaism in many of the same ways the Pharisees did. Just as they revolutionized Judaism to fit their modern needs, so to do we as Reform Jews keep our faith relevant through modernization and adaptation.

The class should conclude with the following questions:

How do you see yourself as a Reform Jew similar to a Pharisee?

What lessons can you take away from the Pharisees?

Journal Entry for next class:

What elements of Pharisaic Judaism do you see in your own practice? What elements of Sadduceac Judaism? Do you feel like you practice any unwritten tradition that simply comes from your family, or was passed down to you from some else?

Lesson 4- Out into the Countryside: Moving from Jerusalem to Yavneh

Note: Parts in blue are meant to be used as texts for classroom distribution

Parts in red are meant to be used as lecture style notes for the teacher

Parts in italics are suggested answers to questions posed to the class

Core Concepts:

The purpose of Rabbinic Law (*Halakha*) is to modernize Judaism

The Tannaim created new Jewish institutions —new judicial system, controls over the priesthood, alternatives to the Temple— in order transition Judaism into law and prayer centered faith in the absence of the Temple.

Learner Outcomes:

Students will know the following terminology: *Tannaim*, *halacha*, Temple Cult

Students will be able to address issues of Jewish practice in a rabbinic way

Students will evaluate how rabbinic changes parallel their own Jewish choices

Students will develop a sense of belonging with the rabbinic tradition

Timetable (Note this class can easily be extended and done as 2 sessions)

Set Induction: :00- :15

Leading up to the Destruction: :15-:25

When Change/Assimilation is too much: :25-:35

Josephus's Lament: :35-:45

Legend of Zakkai: :45-1:00

The Beit Din: 1:00-1:25

Wrap Up: 1:25- 1:30

Set Induction:

How is my temple like the Temple?

Show class a picture of Herod's Temple and a regular American Jewish Temple (See Bellow)



Have class list why think each building is central for the Judaism of the day

Herod's Temple	American Temple
<i>The place where people worshipped God through sacrifice</i>	<i>The place where people worshipped God through prayer</i>
<i>Place where all the holidays are worshipped.</i>	<i>Houses most Jewish educational facilities</i>
<i>Place where the Jewish aristocracy congregated</i>	<i>Place where Jews go for cultural Jewish activities (i.e. Israeli Dance, Art Classes, Music Classes)</i>
<i>The site of the Holy of Holies, God's Dwelling Place</i>	<i>Place of lifecycle events (i.e. Bar Mitzvah, Baby Namings, Brit Milah, Weddings, Funerals)</i>
	<i>Houses the structure for the employment of Jewish leadership</i>

Today we are going to examine and experience how Jewish life and the structure of the Jewish institution adapted based on necessity after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. Before we delve into the lesson, I want us to think about what we would need to today if the entire synagogue building structure were destroyed. Looking at the list above, how might Judaism reform or adapt in order to survive?

- *Jews could do services in their homes instead of a synagogue*
- *Jews could begin individual prayer*
- *Jews could establish free standing schools or move towards a day school model of education*
- *Life cycle events could take place in the home or at other venues*
- *The Torah could be housed in portable arks*

Leading up to the Destruction

Instructor should note that this is a very brief summary of a significant period of history. The historical details are not the focus of the course, but they are important within the general scheme of history. For a more complete historical account, the instructor should guide students toward the following resources:

Amy-Jill Levine, “Visions of Kingdoms: From Pompey to the First Jewish Revolt,” The Oxford history of the Biblical World (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 352-387.

Martin Cohen, Two sister faiths: introduction to a typological approach to early rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity (Worcester: Assumption College, 1985).

In order to understand the destruction of the Temple, we should look back a little bit in history to the shift from the Hasmonean Dynasty to Roman Rule. The Hasmonean Dynasty lasted from roughly 165 CE to 67 CE. As we question which Judaism is

authentic today, so too was there a question of authenticity. We have already seen the divide between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. So too was there also questions of authenticity of the monarchy This led to a civil war in the country between the ruler Hyrcanus II (who supported the Pharisees) and Aristobulous (who supported the Sadducees). Hyrcanus II invited the Roman general Pompey to intervene. Pompey conquered Judea and put the country under Roman rule, establishing Jewish client rulers.

In order to give students a visual representation and historical account of the event, the instructor can use the text and illustration from bellow (Note: If time is an issue, this section is expendable)



Pompey Laying Siege to the Temple in Jerusalem:

"Of the Jews there fell twelve thousand, but of the Romans very few.... and no small enormities were committed about the temple itself, which, in former ages, had been inaccessible, and seen by none; for Pompey went into it, and not a few of those that were with him also, and saw all that which it was unlawful for any other men to see but only for the high priests. There were in that temple the golden table, the holy candlestick, and the pouring vessels, and a great quantity of spices; and besides these there were among the treasures two thousand talents of sacred money: yet did Pompey touch nothing of all this, on account of his

regard to religion; and in this point also he acted in a manner that was worthy of his virtue. The next day he gave order to those that had the charge of the temple to cleanse it, and to bring what offerings the law required to God; and restored the high priesthood to Hyrcanus, both because he had been useful to him in other respects, and because he hindered the Jews in the country from giving Aristobulus any assistance in his war against him." Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae*, book 14, chapter 4;

The Roman rule in Judea was at first carried out through client rule. That is, they backed certain kings to rule that would answer only to Rome. The most well known of which, was Herod, who renovated the Temple in Jerusalem. Herod was a ruthless dictator, but at the same time, a great builder and a visionary leader. Living as within a society

dominated not only by Roman rule, but also Roman culture, Herod lived a life as a Hellenized Jew.

Client rule didn't last long in Judea. Shortly after Herod's death, Rome decided that Judea was no longer fit for client rule, and adopted a system of using Roman governors to rule the land. In 6 CE, Coponius was installed as the first governor (procuritor). As you might imagine, living under foreign rule has its disadvantages, especially when the ruling party doesn't understand or share your values. As American Jews, we find that our culture is compatible with the value system of Judaism. Roman governors often proved to be ruthless and intolerant of Judaism. The situation thus worsened as the Romans continually imposed their culture and religion (and taxes) upon the Jews.

When is change/assimilation too much?

Have class answer the following question: What impositions might our government impose that would cause you to rebel? Compare answers to reasons why Jews rebelled in 66 CE.

What would cause you to rebel in the US	Why Jews rebelled against Gessius Florus
Higher Taxes	Florus raises taxes and confiscates money from the Temple treasury
Infringement upon Jewish practice	Blocking of a synagogue in Caesaria by a building erected by Greeks (Nero sided with the Greeks)
Desecration of Jewish worship	Florus was corrupt and took bribes.
	Tensions between Jewish and Gentile population

Four years into the Jewish War, the Romans laid siege to Jerusalem, which had been occupied by Jewish defenders since the beginning of the revolt. The Roman army, led by the future Emperor Titus, destroyed the Temple on the 9th of Av, Tisha Ba'av, in the year

70 CE. Together, we will look at Josephus's account of the destruction and his view of what the destruction meant for the Jewish people.

The Lamentation of Josephus **War 5:14,19-20**

The darts that were thrown by the engines [of the seditious factions] came with that force, that they went over all the buildings and the Temple itself, and fell upon the priests and those that were about the sacred offices; insomuch that many persons who came thither with great zeal from the ends of the earth to offer sacrifices at this celebrated place, which was esteemed holy by all mankind, fell down before their own sacrifices themselves, and sprinkled that altar which was venerable among all men, both Greeks and barbarians, with their own blood. The dead bodies of strangers were mingled together with those of their own country, and those of profane persons with those of the priests, and the blood of all sorts of dead carcasses stood in lakes in the holy courts themselves.

O most wretched city, what misery so great as this did you suffer from the Romans, when they came to purify you from your internal pollutions! For you could no longer be a place fit for God, nor could you long continue in being, after you had been a sepulchre for the bodies of your own people, and had made the holy house itself a burying place in this civil war of yours. Yet may you again grow better, if perchance you will hereafter appease the anger of that God who is the author of your destruction.

Questions:

1. What does the destruction of the Temple mean for Josephus

Josephus sees the destruction and desecration of the Temple with human bodies as an indication that God has turned away from the Jewish people, and that the Temple can no longer be a place where Jews can connect with God.

2. What is Josephus referring to when he says “purify you from your internal pollutions?”

He is indicating that the Temple practice was corrupt and not fit to be the link between the Jewish people and God. The Jewish civil strife and corrupt theocratic system was not fit for worship of God

3. What do you think the fate of Judaism is according to Josephus

Josephus seems to think that Judaism cannot survive if there is no Temple. He indicates that God will find favor in the Jews again only when the Temple is rebuilt in greater glory.

The Legend of Jochanan ben Zakkai and the creation of the Beit Din.

Class should read the Talmudic story bellow:

(B. Git 56a-b; Eich, R)

R' Yochanan lived in Yerushalayim when Vespasian, sent by the Roman emperor to attack Yerushalayim, lay siege to the city. The siege lasted for three years. Three wealthy people in Yerushalayim, Nakdimon ben Gurion, Ben Kalba Savua, and Ben Tzitzis HaKetzas, volunteered to supply the city with food and wood. In Yerushalayim there was a group of zealots called the Biryonim who wanted to battle the Romans. The leader of the Biryonim was Abba Sikra (also known as Ben Batiach), the nephew of R' Yochanan ben ZakkaL The sages told the Biryonim not to wage war on the Romans, whereupon the Biryonim burned the storehouses of grain. There was a famine in Yerushalayim, and R' Yochanan ben Zakkai decided to leave the city to speak to Vespasian.

Since there was a rule that a person could only leave the city as a corpse, it was planned that R' Yochanan should pretend to be sick and die. He was placed in a casket and R' Eliezer and R' Yehoshua carried the casket to the gates of the city. When they came to the gates, the Biryonim wanted to stab R' Yochanan to see if he was really dead. R' Yochanan's nephew, who had participated in the plan, said, "Do you want the Romans to say that the Jews stabbed their rabbi?" R' Eliezer and R' Yehoshua left R' Yochanan in middle of the field and returned to the city. That night R' Yochanan went to Vespasian in the Roman camp. As soon as he entered he said, "Greetings, your Majesty." Vespasian said, "You deserve to be killed twice for those words. First, I am not a king ... if the king

hears that people are calling me king he will kill me. When you call me your Majesty it appears that you are mocking me. In addition, if I am king, why did you not come until now?" R' Yochanan said, "Although you may not be king now, you will be a king, for if you are not destined to be a king, Yerushalayim will not be given over to you ... and I did not come earlier since the Biryonim did not allow me to come."

Vespasian asked R' Yochanan, "If I have a barrel of honey and there is a poisonous snake wrapped around it, how can I rid myself of the snake without breaking the barrel?" (i.e. Vespasian is forced to burn Yerushalayim and kill its inhabitants [the honey] because of the Biryonim [snake] who were attacking the Romans). R' Yochanan ben Zakkai remained silent. (R' Yosef later said that R' Yochanan's silence was a fulfillment of the verse "that turns the wise backward and makes their minds foolish" [Isa. 44:25]. Since the sins of the people were so great, R' Yochanan was caused to be left without a proper response to Vespasian.)

R' Yochanan was taken into a dark chamber within seven other chambers, all of them windowless. There Romans would ask him, "What time is it?" and he was able to respond correctly all the time. He explained to them, "I know that I am able to study ten chapters of the Mishnah every hour, so if I study forty chapters I know that four hours have elapsed. Since I study Torah by day and by night I always know what time it is." Three days later, while Vespasian was getting dressed after bathing in the river, he was told that the emperor had died and he had been elected emperor in his place. Vespasian, who had already put on one shoe, could not put on the second shoe, so he summoned R' Yochanan. R' Yochanan explained that he could not put on the second shoe because he must have just received good news ... (Prov.15:30), and he suggested that he think of his enemy to cause his bones to shrink again (Prov. 17:22) Before Vespasian returned to Rome, he allowed R' Yochanan a few requests. R' Yochanan asked that the city of Yavneh and the sages be spared, that the line of Nesiim, the family of Rabban Gamliel, not be killed, and for a physician to care for R' Tzadok.¹

Questions:

1. Other than sheer survival, why does Yochanan ben Zakkai find it necessary to found a new center for Judaism?

Zakkai understood that Jerusalem without the Temple could not longer serve as the center for Jewish life. The whole foundation of Jewish worship had been destroyed and would need to be reinvented. The Temple was more than just a place, it was a link to God.

¹ Translation from: Shulamis Frieman, *Who's Who in the Talmud* (London: Jason Aronson Inc., 2000), 393-394.

Yavneh would not replace Jerusalem, but it would be the place in which Judaism would be reinvented.

2. What role do you think the Temple would play in the Judaism that Zakkai would create in Yavneh?

Zakkai and the other sages expected that the Temple would be rebuilt. They never expected that the changes that they would make would be permanent. While they were concerned with how Judaism should be practiced without the Temple, their ideal was that there would be a Temple.

3. Why did Jochanan ben Zakkai ask for Yavneh, of all places, as the location for his projected academy?

Instructor may need to fill class in that Yavneh was a town populated by both Greeks and Judeans and had for some time been the property of the Roman imperial family. Zakkai knew that it would be a city that would be spared a similar fate to Jerusalem because of its value to Rome. When Vespasian is using the metaphor of the snake around the honey in regard to the people of Jerusalem protecting the honey, Zakkai might have argued that in Yavneh, the honey was sweeter for the Romans, and the snake would be less dangerous.

4. If you had been a Jew living in Judea, would you want to stay and defend the city against the Romans (which meant certain death), or escape to Yavneh with Zakkai and join in preserving Judaism?

What Changed from Jerusalem to Yavneh?

	Jerusalem	Yavneh
Worshipping God	Sacrifice	Prayer
Authority	Priests	Rabbis (Tannaim)
Focus on Religious Practice	Temple Cult	Study
Serving God in Daily Life	Only within the Temple	Observance of Mitzvot

In understanding the Beit Din, we are going to look at an argument between rabbis concerning how a particular Jewish custom should be performed in the wake of the Temple's destruction. Because Temple practice was so central to Judaism, the rabbis often struggle with how a tradition should be carried out if there is no Temple. Here we are going to look at the question of shofar blowing on Shabbat. Students should receive a copy of the text found bellow and break up into chevrotah to look at Mishnah Rosh HaShana 4:1-2. In pairs they should discuss the questions and complete instructions for creating their own modern mishnaic-style ruling.

<p>1. When the festival day of Rosh HaShana would occur on Shabbat, they would sound the shofar in the Temple, but not in the other provinces. When the Temple was destroyed, Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai made the rule that they should sound the shofar in every place in which there was a rabbinic court (<i>beit din</i>). Rabbi Eliezar said that Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakai ruled that this only applied to Yavneh [the place in which he had established his rabbinic court]. The others said to him: Yavneh is the same as any other place in which there is a rabbinic court.</p> <p>2. [Rabbi Eliezar responded:] However, Jerusalem was more significant than Yavneh; in every city that is within sight and sound, and is close enough to go there, they should sound the shofar [even without a rabbinic court]. [They responded:] nevertheless, in Yavneh and in every locale in which there is a rabbinic court [they should sound the shofar].</p>	<p>א יום טוב של ראש השנה שחל להיות בשבת, במקדש היו תוקעים, אבל לא במדינה. משחרב בית המקדש, התקין רבן יוחנן בן זכאי, שיהיו תוקעין בכל מקום שיש בו בית דין. אמר רבי אלעזר. לא התקין רבן יוחנן בן זכאי אלא ביבנה בלבד. אמרו לו, אחד יבנה ואחד כל מקום שיש בו בית דין:</p> <p>ב ועוד זאת היתה ירושלים יתרה על יבנה, שכל עיר שהיא רואה ושומעת וקרובה ויכולה לבוא, תוקעין. וביבנה לא היו תוקעין אלא בבית דין בלבד:</p>
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Questions:

1. Why is there a need to adapt this Jewish practice after the destruction of the Temple?
2. What was the significance of having a rabbinic court, and why do you think that it was necessary to have a rabbinic court in order to be able to blow the shofar on Shabbat?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Rabbi Eliezar's more stringent interpretation of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai's rabbinic ruling? Why are the others more lenient.

The Modern Beit Din

Later rulings made by the Amoraim of the Babylonian Talmud forbade the blowing of the shofar on Shabbat. According to the later sage Rabbah, a man who does not know how to

use the Shofar might be induced to carry it through public places on a Sabbath to an expert in order to learn how to blow it, and so violate the Sabbath, and for this reason the Rabbis forbade the blowing of the Shofar on Sabbath altogether.

Break up into chevrotah and form two opposing sides of a modern Reform Beit Din. One person should argue the side that today as modern Jews, we should observe the "traditional" practice held by Orthodox Jews today of not blowing the shofar on Rosh HaShanah if it is Shabbat. The opposing partner should take the other position, arguing that as modern Jews we should be allowed to blow the shofar on Shabbat. Write down your arguments and form them into the mishnaic style debates as seen above from Rosh HaShana 4:1-2.

Questions to consider:

Does our Reform notion of the temple as a house of worship parallel the Temple in Jerusalem?

Should we consider our congregational assembly equivalent to a Beit Din?

Should we abandon the use of all instruments on shabbat including the shofar according to talmudic law

Does the lack of mention of the injunction against blowing the Shofar on Shabbat in the Torah play any role?

Numbers 29: 1. And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a holy gathering; you shall do no labor; it is a day of blowing the horn for you	א וּבַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כָּל-מְלָאכָת עַבְדְּךָ לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ יוֹם תְּרוּעָה יִהְיֶה לָכֶם
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In today's time, can the shofar be blown on Shabbat in Jerusalem and the provinces around it as Rabbi Eliezar argues?

Wrap Up

It is so hard to comprehend in our day what it would be like for the Jews in rabbinic times to lose the Temple. We discussed in this unit some things we might do if our synagogue structure would be destroyed. We would surely be stuck with the hope of rebuilding while at the same time having the realistic need to adapt.

The needs for religious reforms in rabbinic times were not based just on adapting to life after destruction, however. Let us recall the many reforms and changes that were taking place long before the Temple was destroyed. The Pharisees created the

“paradosis,” the Oral Law, in order to find new ways to create Jewish meaning in their religious practice. The Pharisaic tradition also brought spirituality to the people, creating a faith that was not just based within the Temple, but within people’s observance of the law. The Tannaim later continued this tradition of shifting connection to God through Temple cult to connection to God through the observance of Mitzvot. Without religious reform, we would be stuck in the past worshipping God through sacrifice! While Orthodoxy may not admit it, they are also a Judaism that has reformed in many of the same ways that we as Reform Jews have. In the same way that rabbinic Judaism is a religion of reform, so too are all forms of modern Judaism religions that have reformed. As a denomination that recognizes the historical need for keeping Judaism vibrant, relevant, and meaningful, we must be a faith that is comfortable with the changes and innovations we make to our practice.

Journal Reflection for next class

What do you find to be inspiring, interesting, or problematic about the way in which the rabbis transformed Judaism? What changes did they make that most strongly resonate with your own Jewish practice?

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