

**RABBI NORMAN LAMM**

**SEMINAR IN JEWISH THOUGHT AND CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS:  
METHODS AND APPROACHES**

**-MACHSHEVET YISRAEL  
R.I.E.T.S.**

**YESHIVA UNIVERSITY  
1975-6**



## LECTURE #1

1. This is primarily a methodological course, "how-to," and only incidentally substantive. This is a Seminar course, and will be treated as such.
2. Each student must get, as soon as possible, a copy of Faith and Doubt.
3. Motivation (for interest in this area):
  - a) Understanding Torah view - אנציה טורה ורביא צירר.
  - b) Demonstrating relevance of Torah - טורה חיים (here, medieval rationalists' proofs of God's existence: to reveal God in intellectual idiom.)
  - c) To teach Judaism: Hasbarah (not apologetics, although this has its place too. Often consists in demonstrating the obvious -- story Eliach and Ephraim Holland. But -- beware banality; mention English translation of תשע).
  - d) Polemical reasons: צו מה אפס (examples: my work on Conservative Ketubah; mixed pews; second day exile; dialogue. But be very careful not to be self-righteous; no mud-slinging.)
4. Necessary personal resources:
  - a) Curiosity and Interest
  - b) Openness to contemporary problems -- no intellectual ghettos
  - c) Confidence that answers can be found or devised (Gaon and Meiri on הפניה ופניה זה זכא זה).
  - d) Acquaintance with halakhic sources and also philosophic-Aggadic-Musar-Kabbalistic-Hasidic sources, etc. (I am opposed to an exclusively halakhocentric view)
  - e) Ability to trace material, i.e., research techniques.
  - f) Talent for organizing and systemizing.
  - g) Literary ability.
5. Typology:
  - a) Popular-Hasbarah (as: "Tisha B'Av Today", Jewish Life; Hedge of Roses; "The Second Days" - Chavrusa; "Separate Pews; Tradition)
  - b) Political-Social ("Talmud and Tapes" - Shma: Ethics of Protest - Jewish Spectator; Jewish Ethics of Leisure -- Faith & Doubt; Moral Revolution -- Faith and Doubt)



- c) Legal ("Homosexuality" - Encyclopedia Yearbook; Ketubah - Tradition; Self-incrimination - Faith and Doubt; Privacy - Faith and Doubt; "Cog in Wheel" - Kirschenbaum)
  - d) Scientific-Technological (Religious Implications of Extraterrestrial Life - Faith and Doubt; Medical Malpractice)
  - e) Educational-Philosophical (Faith and Doubt; Two Views on Synthesis - Faith and Doubt; God Is Alive - Jewish Life)
  - f) Israel: (Yom Kippur War - Davis Volume; Six Day War and Hester Panim - Tradition)
6. Distribute reprints of my Privacy article or: see F & D; & copies of my Tisha b'Av article. Assign for next week: Review both articles and show: motivation; audience aimed at; what sources were used; how did I get them; how did I use them; and, above all, organization and approach.
7. Term assignments: Will want two papers per semester, one a research paper on a substantive theme, and one a major treatment of a popular-Hasbarah theme.
8. In addition, occasional literary efforts to develop a style, based upon Jewish thought. Distribute Xerox copies of C.S. Lewis, Screwtape Letters, numbers one and eight. Assign for two weeks from now: a "Jewish Screwtape Letter" on the theme: תאמון תורה כנגד כחף. Choose some polemical aspect against it and refute it -- and use solid, theological reasoning without pedantry and scholarly apparatus. Be prepared to read it in class and then show your sources.



Xerox copies of C.S. Le-3-5. Scriptage...  
numbers one and two. Design for two weeks...  
now a "Jewish Forensic Center" on the...  
Choose some polemical...  
aspect of it and refute it -- and use solid...  
theological material. LECTURE #2...  
apparatus. Be prepared to read it in class and...  
then show your sources.

1. Collect reports on Privacy and Tisha b'Av articles.  
Ask some students to read comments on each piece.  
Prepare my Jewish Life article on Kennedy - Manchester.

2. Suggested theme for the two term papers ("B" due on Nov. 26, "A" on Dec. 31 ; but first submit outlines and sources: "B" - 11/12; "A"-12/12. The outline should contain: statement of problem, method you intend to use, sources, outline. Will be read in class and criticised by students) -- choose one from A and one from B:

A. Research Themes:

1. Active Proselytization
2. Women as Witnesses
3. Death: Fear, Passage, Attitudes to It.
4. Suicide
5. Interfaith Dialogue
6. **התנחלות** **תורה**
7. Communes and Collectivism
8. Will Torah Survive?
9. Euthanasia
10. Care of Aged; Nursing Homes
11. Informing Against Fellow Jews in a Democratic Court
12. Alcoholism, Narcotics, Tobacco
13. Capital Punishment
14. Censorship
15. Authority and Infallibility
16. Sterilization
17. ZPG



11. Informing Again-4-Fellow Jews in a Democratic  
Court

12. Alcoholism, Narcotics, Tobacco

18. Vegetarianism

19. The Occult: Black Magic, Witchcraft

20. Teachers' Strikes

21. Teachers' Tenure

22. Nudity

23. Ethical Culture

24. Oriental Religions

25. ESP and Psychic Phenomena

**B. Hasbarah of Individual Mitzvot:**

- |                            |                     |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Sabbath Candles         | 8. Arba Minnim      |
| 2. Hanukkah Candles        | 9. Hagbah & Ge'ilah |
| 3. Purim                   | 10. Hoshana Rabbah  |
| 4. Tefillin                |                     |
| 5. Tzitzit                 |                     |
| 6. Circumcision            |                     |
| 7. <u>Sephirat Ha-Omer</u> |                     |

**3. Form:**

1. The situation
2. Challenge/question to Judaism
3. History of problem in Judaism: Biblical, Talmudic-Midrashic, Kabbalistic, Aggadic, philosophical; halakhic (chronologically); contemporary.
4. Parallel development in: other religions, philosophies, legal systems, science or literature.
5. Analytic in Judaism: critical analysis, using one or several of the areas mentioned in #3 above.
6. Contemporary value
7. Conclusion



4. Methodology:

1. Choice of problems:

- a) either direct challenge to Judaism, or current issue which deserves elucidation of Jewish point of view.
- b) not issues that are too fundamental or require a heavy volume.
- c) not problems belonging in an academic journal with scholarship and footnotes etc., and which may sometimes be irrelevant. Stress relevance, interest.
- d) not sermons or bulletin articles.

2. Analyze problem

3. Audience you're aiming at: highbrow? middlebrow?

4. Research

5. Organization - outline

6. Writing

7. Revision.

5. Exercise -- due in two weeks:

Choose three essays from three different categories mentioned above (popular-Hasbarah; political-social; legal; scientific-technological; educational-philosophical; Israel) and write up each one as follows:

- a) outline
- b) reconstruct: what were author's goals and motivations? Sources? Methods?
- c) Criticize: do you agree? Suggest alternative approaches.
- d) Language and style

6. Partial list of sources, auxiliary material:

A. Biblical:

1. Classical commentators

2. Use of התנ"ך והקבלה: תורה ומצוות

3. Mandelkern's Concordance

4. איזנשטיין, "אוצר מאמרי התנ"ך"

5. Contemporary literature on Bible



C. Partial list of sources, auxiliary material:

A. Biblical:

B. Midrashic and Aggadic:

1. Classical Midrashim
2. ילקוט שמעוני
3. מ"צ. גרוס, "אוצר האגדה (ג'כ)
4. מ"צ. גרוס, "אוצר האגדה (ג'כ)
5. מ"צ. גרוס, "אוצר האגדה (ג'כ)

C. Talmudic and Halakhic:

1. אינציקלופדון תלמודית
2. פה"ק יצחק
3. שו"ת חתם
4. גבי דרינמן, "אוצר אמרי אבות (ג'כ)
5. מ"צ. גרוס, "אוצר אמרי אבות (ג'כ)
6. יג"י חסידים, "אוצר מאמי האב" (ג'כ)
7. א"י הי"א, "אוצר דברי חכמים ופוסקים (בין אחר)
8. אגד אורח, "חצ"ל: אמונות ודעות

D. Encyclopedias:

1. Encyclopedia Judaica
2. Jewish Encyclopedia
3. Universal Jewish Encyclopedia

E. Kabbalah:

1. G. Scholem, MTJM, and other of his works
2. תלמי וחסידים, "משנת רמב"ם (ג'כ)
3. מנחם מנדל - לקט שמואל (ה'כ)
4. רמב"ם אגד, "פסוקים על חסידים
5. ספר חסידים (מנחם מנדל מוה"ק)



F. Philosophy:

Most recent editions of classical works of Jewish philosophy

G. General and Miscellaneous:

1. Encyclopedia Britannica
2. Hasting's Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics
3. Encyclopedia of Philosophy

H. Contemporary Books:

1. Norman Lamm, Faith and Doubt; Hedge of Roses
2. Emanuel Rackman, One Man's Judaism
3. Louis Jacobs, What Does Judaism Say About...?
4. ברטל, "צוין מלך לאלות הנצח"
5. ח.נ. כ"נס, "באלי לם; תגה ואוסר"
6. David Feldman, Marital Relations, Abortion, and Birth Control in Jewish Law; Fred Rosner, Modern Medicine and Jewish Law.
7. Popular books, as: Prager and Telushkin, Eight Questions...; Maurice Lamm, The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning; Hecht, You Ever Asked Yourself These Questions?; Miller, Rejoice O Youth; Donin, To Be a Jew; Wouk, This Is My God.
8. Tradition; Judaism; Hadarom; Dinei Israel
9. Mention Library of Jewish Law and Ethics

I. Non-Jewish Literature:

1. C.S. Lewis - all his works, especially Screwtape Letters
7. Distribute Xerox copies of Kirschenbaum article, "Cog in the Wheel."



7. Popular books, esp. Prager and Telushkin,  
Erich Gruen, Maurice Lamm, The  
Jewish Law: A Guide to Jewish Mourning, Recht,  
You Don't Have to Be a Jew to Be a Jew.  
Miller, Richard D. Young, Dasha, to be a  
Jew: You, Yes, to be a Jew.

### LECTURE #3

1. Review imitations of C.S. Lewis.  
Tradition, and Jewish Law: Dinei Israel
2. Review analyses of Ketubah and Tisha B'Av articles.  
Tradition, and Jewish Law: Ethics

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"Cog in the Wheel."



## LECTURE #1

1. This is primarily a methodological course, "How-to," and only incidentally substantive.

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a) Understanding Torah ~~view~~ - *להבין את התורה*

b) Demonstrating relevance of Torah - *לראות חשיבות* (here, medieval rationalists' proofs of God's existence: to reveal God in intellectual idiom.)

c) To teach Judaism: Hasbarah (not apologetics, although this has its place too. Often consists in demonstrating the obvious -- story Eliach and Ephraim Holland. But -- beware banality; mention English translation of *ש"ק* ).

d) Polemical reasons: *לענות על שאלות* (examples: my work on Conservative Ketubah; mixed pews; second day exile; dialogue. But be very careful not to be self-righteous, no mud-slinging).

4. Necessary personal resources:

a) Curiosity and Interest

b) Openness to contemporary problems -- no intellectual ghettos

c) Confidence that answers can be found or devised (Gaon and Meiri on *ההפך וההפך בה צבא*.)

d) Acquaintance with halakhic sources and also philosophic-Aggadic-Musar-Kabbalistic-Hasidic sources, etc. (I am opposed to an exclusively halakhocentric view)

e) Ability to trace material, i.e., research techniques.

Talent for organizing and systemizing.  
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'ar-Hasbarah (as: "Tisha B'av Today", Jewish Life; Hedge of Roses;



"The Second Days" - Chavrusa; "Separate Pews; Tradition)

- b) Political - Social ("Talmud and Tapes" - Shma; Ethics of Protest - Jewish Spectator; Jewish Ethics of Leisure -- F & D; Moral Revolution -- F & D)
- c) Legal ("Homosexuality" - Encyclopedia Yearbook; Ketubah - Tradition; Self-incrimination - F & D; Privacy - F & D; "Cog in Wheel" - Kirschenbaum)
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6. Distribute reprints of my Ketuba article and Xerox copies of my Tisha B'Av article. Assign for next week: Review both articles and show: motivation; audience aimed at; what sources were used; how did I get them; <sup>how did I use them;</sup> and, above all, organization and approach.

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## LECTURE #2

but not submit outline  
+ source by DATE.  
the outline should con-  
tain: statement of  
problem, method you  
intend to use, source,  
; will outline

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8. Will Torah survive?
9. Euthanasia
10. Care of aged; Nursing homes
11. Informing Against Fellow Jews in a Democratic Court
12. Alcoholism, Narcotics, Tobacco
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2. use of *אמנות ודברים*; *הקדמה* *מבוא*
3. Mandelkern's Concordance
4. *המקראות המגולגלות*
5. contemporary literature on Bible

B. Midrashic and Aggadic:

1. classical Midrashim
2. *מדרש רב*
3. *מדרש רב*, *מדרש רב*, *מדרש רב*
4. *מדרש רב* (Psalms)

5.



C. Talmudic and Halakhic:

1. יאן צאנזער חתומים
2. ספר יצחק
3. שו"ת קמח
4. שו"ת אורח חיים, יאן פרידמאן זאנזאנער (ה"ק)
5. מ"ק, "מאמרים ומאמרים" (ה"ק)
6. יל"ו חסידים, "יאן צאנזער חתומים" (ה"ק)
7. יאן צאנזער, "יאן צאנזער חתומים" (ה"ק)
8. יאן צאנזער, "יאן צאנזער חתומים" (ה"ק)

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