Aramaic
RB-HEBRW-211
2 graduate credits
Hebrew College Rabbinical School
Spring 2015

Instructor
Harvey N. Bock
Phone: (617) 213-7906
E-mail: hbock@hebrewcollege.edu
Office hours by appointment

Course Texts

M. Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature (there are many printings; the most recent, with relatively large print, is Hendrickson, 2005)
(Optional) Y. Frank, Grammar for Gemara and Targum Onkelos: An Introduction to Aramaic (Ariel, 2003)

Course Description

In this course we will study the Aramaic of the Babylonian Talmud (Babylonian Jewish Aramaic, or “BJA”). Our approach will be to build on the students’ pre-existing knowledge of Hebrew and to contrast features of Aramaic with corresponding features of Hebrew.

You will be asked to prepare texts in advance of class. In your preparation you are welcome to use vocalized texts, such as in the Steinsaltz editions of the Babylonian Talmud. In class, however, you will be expected to work from the texts that you have been provided.

Your performance in the class will be assessed based on preparation for class, class participation, performance on periodic quizzes, and a final project.

Week 1
• Overview of Aramaic
• Phonological features of Aramaic
Week 2
- Nouns and adjectives
- Pronouns
- Basic verb forms: pe’al perfect, active participle and passive participle

Week 3
- Pronoun suffixes
- Binyanim (stems)

Week 4
- Verbs
  - Perfect and imperfect affixes
  - “Sound” roots in pe’al

Week 5
- Verbs (cont’d)
  - “Sound” roots in pa’el, af’el and the passive binyanim

Week 6
- Verbs (cont’d)
  - The use of auxiliaries with the participle
  - Common “weak” roots

Week 7
- Verbs (cont’d)
  - Common “weak” roots
  - Ambiguous forms

Weeks 8–10
- Additional text reading

Weeks 11–13
- Non-Talmudic texts:
  - Dan. 2:4–17
  - קרית דרבי
  - יד דרוב
  - Ketubbah
Additional Bibliography

Overviews

Dictionaries
M. Sokoloff, A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic (Bar Ilan University Press, 1990)

Grammars
J.N. Epstein, דקדוק ארמית עליה (Magnes Press, 1960), which should be read with the critical review by E.Y. Kutscher, מתארק דקדוק ארמית школ ההלמונד המבליי, in E.Y. Kutscher, Hebrew and Aramaic Studies (Magnes, 1977), pp. 149–177

General
G. Deutscher, The Unfolding of Language: An Evolutionary Tour of Mankind’s Greatest Invention (Metropolitan, 2005)

Additional Instructional Material
I. Jerusalmi, The Talmud is in Aramaic: Non-Halakhic Passages in Aramaic Selected from the Babli, Vocalized and Explained (HUC-JIR, 1982)