Justice, Revenge, Repentance & Forgiveness in Jewish Literature & Thought
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CG-JTHT-631
3 graduate credits
Thursdays, 11:15-1:15 pm
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Justice, Revenge, Repentance and Forgiveness in Jewish Literature and Thought

Judaism has given much thought to these four concepts and values in interpersonal, inter-ethnic and human-divine relationships, from Biblical times to the present. The Bible attributes to God the command that one should not harbor a grudge against a fellow Israelite as well as the command to annihilate the Amalekites because they attacked Israel when they were vulnerable after they had just left Egypt. Rabbinic teachings elaborate upon and modify biblical teachings and we will study texts from the Talmud and midrash that do so, such as the idea of midat hadin (the measure of justice) and midat harahamim (the measure of compassion/forgiveness). During the medieval period rabbis wrote many books on the subject of repentance and forgiveness in the human-divine encounter and in interpersonal relationships. In the modern period Jews have grappled with the request that they forgive the German people or even Nazis and their collaborators. We will also compare and contrast some teachings of Judaism with those of Christianity.

Grades will be based upon completing the readings, class attendance and participation, and a research paper or a creative project.

By the end of the course students should be able to:

Define justice, revenge, repentance and forgiveness as they were understood in Jewish traditions.

Explain the conditions which need to be met for compassion/forgiveness to set aside justice.

Differentiate between texts from the biblical, rabbinic, medieval and modern periods.

Compare and contrast some Jewish teachings on these themes with some Christian ones.

Please bring to class a Tanakh (preferably Hebrew/English even if you don’t read Hebrew).
Justice (Human Justice and Divine Justice)

Accidental Homicide, Blood Avenger and the Cities of Refuge. Numbers 35: 10-30;
Book of Job, Chapters 1, 2, 42:10-17.


Murder. He who spills human blood shall have his blood spilled by a human. (Shofekh dam haadam beadam damo yishafekh), Genesis 9: 1-7.

Prayer of tzidduk hadin (accepting and validating the divine decree). Artscroll Siddur,pg. 798 recited at cemetery)

Psalm 82  Elohim nitzav be'adat El (God stands in the divine assembly…)

**Revenge, Grudges and Resentment**


Amalek. Exodus 17: 8-16; Deut. 25: 17-19; II Samuel Chapter 15

*Av HaRahamim*, Prayer recited on Sabbath morning in traditional liturgy.


Exodus 34: 4-7. (the thirteen Attributes of God).


Leviticus 19: 15-18. Do not bear a grudge; do justice, do not hate in your heart.

Luria, Isaac. Prayer before going to sleep. ArtScroll Siddur


**Repentance**

*Encyclopedia Judaica. Repentance*


2 Samuel 11 – 12:25 ; Psalm 51 (David and Batsheva).

Hosea 14; Ezekiel 18; Isaiah 1.

The Book of Jonah


Excerpts from the liturgy of Yom Kippur (e.g. the Viduy and Tefilat Zakey).


**Forgiveness and Mercy**

Bialik and Ravnitzky. Book of Legends. See entries under Mercy in Index, p. 859

Exodus 32: 1-14; Deuteronomy 13:31 – 14:25

Ezekiel 18; Hosea 14.


Solomon Schimmel. *Wounds Not Healed by Time*, pgs. 61-88