 Date: March 2013

Course Name and Number:

**Interpersonal Laws and Obligations**

**Type of course:** Lecture

**Year of Studies:** 2013 - 2014 **Semester:** Fall **Hours/credits**: 2

**Course Description:**

The aim of the course is to study & analyze the centrality of interpersonal commandments in the Rabbinic tradition. Special focus will be placed on an understanding of the philosophy of Rabbis regarding 'tzedakah' & 'chesed' (charity & kindness). We will study the singular approach of the Rabbis to these topics & we will demonstrate how the authorities of the entire Jewish Torah community were deeply committed to the fulfillment of those laws. In addition to studying the general topics we will select crucial examples of 'tzedakah' & 'chesed' (charity & kindness) and review the details of the fulfillment of these laws as reflected in the corpus of the Jewish ethical codes.

**Detailed Lesson plan:**

**Unit I**

1. Defining the category of interpersonal commandments.
2. The significance of these laws in Jewish tradition.
3. Approaches & teachings of Hillel & Rabbi Akiva to the interpersonal laws.
4. Why no formal blessing of 'tzedakah' & 'chesed' interpersonal Commandments.

**Unit II**

1. 'Tzedakah' & 'chesed' – similarities and differnces.
2. Biblical teaching on charity
3. Talmudic & Midrashic insights into 'tzedakah'.
4. Eight categories of charity
5. Rabbinic laws of 'tzedakah'

**Unit III**

1. 'Doing justice & loving kindness' – analysis of the synoptic teaching of the Prophet Michah.
2. Difference between doing kindness & loving kindness.
3. 'The Torah begins with Chesed & ends with Chesed' – An in-depth analysis of the concept.
4. Practical applications of the laws of chesed
5. 'The world is built through chesed' – glennings from this verse.

**Unit IV**

The 'Gemach' – Interest – free loans in Torah tradition

1. Biblical & Rabbinic prohibitions of interest loans.
2. Historical Development of the 'Gemach' institution.
3. The singularity of the 'Gemach' & it's multi-faceted benefits in the Torah Community.
4. 'Neither a borrower nor a lender be' –

Contrast of Shakespeare's Hamlet to Torah tradition.

**Unit V**

' Hachnasat Orchim' – Home Hospitality

1. Home hospitality in the Biblical narratives & in the Talmudic & Midrashic Literature.
2. 'Welcome guests is greater than welcoming G-d' – commentaries on this puzzling rabbinic dicturn.
3. 'Hachnasat Orchim' not only for the poor: - when, where, how and why.

D) 'Hachnasat Orchim' as a fulfillment of 'Imotatio Dei'

**Unit VI**

'Bikkur Cholim' – Visiting the Sick.

1. Biblical, Talmudic and Midrashic information on 'Bikkur Cholim'.
2. Why is there a commandment to visit the sick? –

Four approaches to the topic.

1. Is there a mitzvah to visit a comatose patient?
2. 'Not visiting the sick is tantamount to murder' – Is this a case of a rabbinic exaggeration?!?
3. Halachic instructions and limitations regarding the fulfillment of Bikkur Cholim.

**Unit VII**

'Chesed shel emet' – Chesed to the deceased & to the mourning family

A) Definition & origin of the term 'Chesed shel emet'

B) Eulogizing & burying the dead in Jewish tradition.

C) Halachic requirements of comforting mourners.

D) Challenges & pitfalls in the fulfillment of 'Chesed shel emet'.

E) Rabbinic traditions on the great reward of 'Chesed shel emet'.

**Course requirements**

Class Attendance & participation.

Submission of homework assignments

Term paper.

Final exam

**Grade Components: Number grade.**

Final – 50%

Paper – 50%

#### Bibliography: (Required/ Elective)

* 1. Bindman, Yirmeyahu: *If you lend my people*: Gemachs and their operation, 1993
  2. Cohen, Israel Meir of Radin (The 'Chofetz Chaim')

*Ahavat Chesed: The love of Kindaness as required by G-d*, 1976.\

* 1. Dansky, Miriam: *To comfort, to cure: Parients & their families talk about the healing power of Bikkur Cholim*, 2006.
  2. Greenbaum, Naftali: *The Love of Kindness*, 1989.
  3. Hartman, David: *The dynamics of tzedakah: From dependence to dignity*, 1996.
  4. Jacob, Walter: *Poverty & tzedakah in the Jewish law*, 2006.
  5. Lamm, Maurice: *Consolation*, 2004
  6. Lowenberg, Frank M*.: From charity to social justice: The emergence of commercial institutions for the support of the poor in ancient Judaism*, 2001.
  7. Moses Ben Maimon: *The degrees of Jewish benevolence,* 1964
  8. Newsner, Jacob: *Tzedakah: Can Jewish philanthropy buy Jewish survival?* 1990.
  9. Pliskin, Zelig: *Love your neighbor*, 1996.
  10. Pliskin, Zelig: *Kindness: changing peoples' lives for the better*, 2000
  11. Raphael, Marc Lee, ed. : *Gifts for the poor: Moses Maimonides' treatise on tzedakah*, 2003.
  12. Salamon, Julie: *Rambam's letter: A meditation in generosity*, 2003.
  13. Shear, Eli M.: *The rich go to heaven: giving charity in Jewish thought,* 1998.
  14. Siegel, Danny: *1+1=3: and 37 other principles for a meaningful life*, 2000
  15. Siegel, Danny: *Munbaz II and other mitzvah heroes*, 1988
  16. Summers, Barbara Fortgang: *Community & responsibility in the Jewish tradition*, 1978.
  17. Telushkin, Joseph: *Words that hurt, words that heal*, 1996
  18. Winkler, Meir, Aishel: *Stories of contemporary Jewish hospitality*, 1994
  19. Wolfson, Ron*: A time to mourn, a time to comfort*, 1993