



## SPRING Course Descriptions 2020 / 5780

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## 8:30-11:30 Sunday/Tuesday/Thursday

**HUMASH /TANACH**  
**TOVAH LEAH NACHMANI**  
**Sun., Tues., Thurs. 8:30-11:30**

**LEVEL: INTRODUCTORY**

**EXODUS:** How was Pharaoh's final solution derailed by foreign and feminine heroism? What are some messages of a burning bush not consumed? Why was Moses, a foreigner to the Israelites, chosen to lead the Jewish people? What were his greatest fears and how did he develop as a leader? For whom were the plagues and what messages did they convey? How are the stories of the Exodus relevant to our post-modern lives?

Through guided text study, and a close reading of the Exodus text in Hebrew, with traditional and modern commentaries, students will discover a variety of answers and even more questions.

**HEBREW:** Daily Hebrew instruction and home study assignments empower the students to greatly increase their Hebrew vocabulary, improve their reading and writing Hebrew as well as their ability to translate Hebrew texts, songs and prayers.

**BOOKS of JONAH, ESTHER, RUTH:** In their appropriate seasons -before the holidays of Rosh Hashana, Purim, and Shavuot - students will study highlights from these books, exploring their historic contexts, and focusing on key issues of moral struggle and free choice.

**MISHNA/TALMUD**  
**RAHEL BERKOVITS**  
**Sun., Tues., Thurs. 8:30-11:30**

**LEVEL: INTRO. +**

In this course students will be introduced to the world of the Ta'anaitic Sages through an in-depth study of their most famous and important text – the Mishnah, which became the basis for all Jewish Law. In this class students will develop skills and analytical tools to decipher the conceptual categories and legal reasoning of the Mishnah. The course aims to train the student to comprehend and question the text independently, through critical analysis of language and structure. In-depth attention will be paid to the specifics of the law as well as the overarching meta-legal concepts and theological and philosophical messages the Sages are trying to convey in their discussions. In the second half of the year we will begin learning the *Gemara* on one of the chapters of Mishnah which we have studied.

**TALMUD**  
**LEAH ROSENTHAL**  
**Sun., Tues., Thurs. 8:30-11:30**

**LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE**

Introduction to the intricacies of the Talmudic discourse. Careful attention is paid to the Talmud's language, terminology and structure as we follow the discussions of the Talmud. The ultimate goal of this course is to bring students as close to independence as possible in their ability to study a page of Gemara. After Sukkot, we will be studying Masechet Bava Kama.

**TALMUD**  
**ZVI HIRSCHFIELD**  
**Sun., Tues., Thurs. 8:30-11:30**

**LEVEL: ADVANCED**

This course is intended for those who have experience with Talmud study and want to increase their knowledge and skill level. Our goal will be to become more familiar with the structure and ideas present in Talmudic discourse, and begin to develop ideas about Halakha and how it operates. We will attempt to incorporate both traditional and modern approaches to Talmud study.

**TALMUD AND HALAKHA**  
**ELISHA ANCSELOVITS and DANIEL REIFMAN**

**LEVEL: KOLLEL**

<b>TALMUD–MASECHET KETUBOT</b> <b>Sunday and Thursday 08:30-11:30</b> <b>(Daniel Reifman)</b>	<b>HILKHOT AVEILUT AND NIDDA</b> <b>Tuesday, 8:30-13:00</b> <b>(Elisha Ancselovits)</b>
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The Talmud portion of this course is designed to complement the Hilkhot Ketubot class, covering many of the relevant sugyot in Masekhet Ketubot. In addition to examining the key Halakhic concepts, we will focus on skills needed to prepare a sugya on one's own, including close analysis of the ways that different Rishonim resolve difficulties in the Gemara text and conceive of the relationship between parallel sugyot.

**8:30-11:30 Monday/Wednesday**

**MISHNA/TALMUD**  
**MEESH HAMMER-KOSSOY**  
**Mon., Wed. 8:30- 11:30**

**LEVEL: INTRODUCTORY**

In this course students will be introduced to the world of the Ta'anaitic Sages through an in-depth study of their most famous and important text – the Mishna, which became the basis for all Jewish Law. During the first semester, we will focus on the Tractate of Berakhot, which treats laws of prayer, recitation of the Shema, and blessing for food and special occasions. Through this masterful text, students will meet basic Jewish concepts especially pertaining to our relationship with the

Divine as well as develop skills and analytical tools to translate and decipher the conceptual categories and legal reasoning of the Mishna. The course aims to train the student to comprehend and question the text independently, through critical analysis of language and structure.

Required book: Mishnah Bahira Berakhot

**HUMASH**  
**MEIR SCHWEIGER**  
**Mon., Wed. 8:30- 11:30**

**LEVEL: INTRO +**

The goal of this course is to give students the ability to analyze a section of *Chumash* with the classic medieval commentaries. For this class, students are expected to have a working knowledge of Hebrew and some formal training in the study of Biblical texts.

The focus of the class will be two-fold:

- 1) To develop the student's skills in reading and analyzing the classic commentaries. Students will be expected to become familiarized with the different approaches of the various commentators by carefully reading each one and comparing/contrasting their styles and content. Students will be encouraged to read the Biblical text carefully, to see the "gaps" and difficulties, which generate a variety of responses by the different commentators.
- 2) To deal with the issues and concepts raised by both the Biblical text and commentaries. Although the class will be grounded in the development of skills, it will encourage students to pursue the depth of the text and commentaries, to explore concepts and themes that impact on one's life. Discussion of themes will be the culmination of a rigorous analysis of the text rather than a substitute for it.

**Texts** - We will study Chapters 1-20 of *Shmot*, focusing on:

- 1) The enslavement of the Jewish people,
- 2) The Ten Plagues
- 3) The First Seder and the Exodus
- 4) The Miracle of the Reed Sea
- 5) The Desert Experience
- 6) The revelation at Sinai
- 7) The personal and public life of Moshe, and how it interfaces with the fate of the nation

All students will be expected to purchase and bring to class the following books:

- 1) *Shemot Mikraot G'dolot* (preferably Mossad HaRav Kook edition- *Torat Chayim*)
- 2) Hebrew-English TaNAkh – JPS or Keter
- 3) Hebrew-English Dictionary (preferably Alkalay)

**HUMASH: SHEMOT/EXODUS**  
**HOWARD MARKOSE**  
**Mon., Wed. 8:30-11:30**

**LEVEL: ADVANCED**

This course is designed to bring to the advanced student a greater understanding and appreciation for the text that is called Shemot (Exodus). Students will gain insight into the nature of the book and its many characters, taking into consideration the book's literary, historical, archeological and linguistic nuances, using various means and sources. Medieval commentaries will be studied along with modern *parshanim*, and relevant ancient Near Eastern literature will also be introduced.

Students should be capable of reading the text with some level of fluency, and be able to translate in a manner which reflects a basic understanding of Biblical Hebrew Grammar. No previous background in Shemot is required, although it can certainly work to the student's advantage to already have studied this book of the Tanach.

Students are to bring to class both Shemot Torat Hayim (Rav Kook Publishers) and a Hebrew/English Tanach (New JPS or The Jerusalem Bible are the preferred editions, but others are certainly acceptable). Students will learn how to navigate the BDB (Brown, Driver and Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament) and the Concordance to the Tanach (either Mandelkern or the preferred Even Shoshan)

### **11:45-1:00 Sunday/Thursday**

**BEKIUT NEVI'IM RISHONIM**  
**MICHAEL HATTIN**  
**Sun., Thurs. 11:45-1:00**

**LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL**  
**FALL/SPRING**

#### **Navigating the Bible**

The books of the Prophets or "Nevi'im" that comprise the second (and largest) section of the Tanakh are *terra incognita* to many of us. Aside from some celebrated passages, much of the material that constitutes the prophetic works – including their historical setting, primary themes, and literary techniques – is, to quote Isaiah, "like the words of a sealed book".

In this course, we will remedy that situation by embarking upon a broad and comprehensive survey of the first, narrative section of the Nevi'im, namely the books of Joshua/Yehoshua, Judges/Shoftim, Samuel/Shmuel and Kings/Melachim. This will necessarily entail a fair amount of preparatory weekly reading by course participants, whether in Hebrew or in translation. In class, we will construct a geographical and historical framework, explore important themes and motifs, and trace the textual continuity that underlies the Hebrew Bible as a whole. **Along the way, we will cover a thousand years of Biblical history as we encounter every significant character and event in the story of the people of Israel!** We will

meet two times a week and instruction will be in English. Required text: a Hebrew Tanakh with translation.

**ENCOUNTERING THE DIVINE PRESENCE WITHIN**      **LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL**  
**YISCAH SMITH**      **SPRING**  
**Sun., Thurs., 11:45-1:00 pm**

Rabbi Akiva would say, "How beloved it is that the human being was created in the image of G-d; how even more beloved it is that one knows that one was created in the Image." Pirkei Avot 3, 14

This class will explore the teachings of R. Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira, the Piaseczna Rebbe, the Aish Kodesh. We shall examine texts that describe Jewish living and tradition as the cultivation of a spiritual practice. His inspiring and progressive ideas discuss the spiritual nature of our body, mind and heart, how we awaken to the Divine presence within us, and how we can integrate these components and expressions of the Jewish experience into one whole healthy being.

**TALMUDIC PERSONALITIES**      **LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL**  
**LEAH ROSENTHAL**      **SPRING**  
**Sun., Thurs. 11:45-1:00**

The class will read classic rabbinic texts focusing on different Mishnaic or Talmudic personalities. As we read, we will attempt to gain insight into the literary character and ideological representation of each great figure. The goal of the class is to create a multi-dimensional context which will inform our reading of rabbinic texts.

**PARSHA IN HEBREW**      **LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL**  
**MEIR SCHWEIGER**  
**Sun., Thurs. in SPRING**

The purpose of this class is to give students an in-depth understanding of the parsha (weekly Torah portion), together with an opportunity to hear and speak Hebrew. We will examine major themes in the parsha, with an emphasis on the classic medieval commentaries, and make every effort to have all discussion be in Hebrew, translating words as needed. Students are expected to read through the parsha before class and to bring a Torat Chaim/ Mikraot Gedolot with them to each session.

## 11:45-1:00 Monday/Wednesday

**SIDDUR- Theory and Practice**  
**ZVI H. - Spring**  
**Mon., Wed. 11:45-1:00**

**LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL**

The Siddur is arguably the Jewish people's greatest literary creation. In it are contained not only familiar prayers but a record of our people's history, culture and linguistic development over the course of more than three millennia. The siddur is of course also the repository of our people's unquenchable yearnings for a better world.

This course will consider the content of the siddur as expressed in *Shacharit* or the morning service – the longest of the daily prayers. We will follow the course of this prayer as we consider its discrete elements, their structure, historical context and deeper meaning. Along the way, we will discuss how parts of the classic liturgy have been adapted, amended or rejected with the rise of denominationalism. Devotees of all (or no) denominations - with their respective *siddurim* - are welcome.

**TALMUDIC HEROINES**  
**GILA FINE**  
**Mon., Wed. 11:45-1:00**

**LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL**  
**SPRING**

The female characters of the Talmud often come across as anti-feminine stereotypes, disparaging descriptions of bad women: the shrew, the femme fatale, the prima donna, and the whore. Yet a careful reading of their stories reveals that there's a lot more to them than initially meets the eye; that the women are far more complex than they first appear; and that the rabbis had rather surprising – so as not to say proto-feminist – views of marriage, childbirth, female power, and sex. In working to unmask the heroines of the Talmud, there's a great deal we can learn – about how to read the characters of a text and, ultimately, how to treat the characters in our lives.

This course serves as an introduction to *Aggada* (Talmudic stories) and requires no prior knowledge.

**BIBLICAL HEBREW GRAMMAR**  
**HOWARD MARKOSE**  
**Mon., Wed. 11:45-1:00**

**LEVEL: INTRO. - SPRING**

The Tanakh is a text that has been analyzed and interpreted many ways throughout its existence. This course will enable the student to read and comprehend the text through the understanding of the Hebrew grammar that is found therein. Focusing on certain Biblical selections, primarily in the Book of Breisheet (Genesis), students will learn how the various verb forms are used to express specific meaning. They will learn to read the text with proper pronunciation and accent, and explore how the Trope (the cantillation marks which provide

accent, punctuation and melody) serve as an aid to the reading and studying of Tanakh. The fall course will be an intermediate level course. Students will be required to possess a rudimentary knowledge of Hebrew grammar for this semester's course. The spring course will be taught at an introductory level.

## **2:30-5:00 Sunday/Tuesday**

**SEXUALITY AND SANCTITY**  
**RAHEL BERKOVITS**  
**Sun., Tues. 2:30-5:00**

**LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL**  
**SPRING**

### **Sexuality and Sanctity: Towards a Jewish Sexual Ethic**

What does Judaism have to say about issues surrounding sexuality? What values and challenges can the rabbinic texts impart for us living with the modern sexual norms of the twenty-first century? In this class we will examine, analyze and openly discuss rabbinic texts from the Torah and Talmud through to the modern responsa and different Jewish denominational responses on topics connected to sexual conduct such as marital sex, pleasure and positions, consent, the laws of *niddah*, Gay sex, premarital/Non-marital sex, masturbation and birth control. We will also examine the topics of transgender and intersex individuals in rabbinic literature (even though those topics are not related to issues of sex- they nonetheless interest students.) The classroom will be a safe space for students of diverse backgrounds, orientations, and practices. All sources are provided in both Hebrew and English and the course is open to all levels and genders.

**JUDIASM AS A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE**  
**DANIEL SILVERSTEIN**  
**Sun., Tues. 2:30-5:00**

**LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL**  
**SPRING**

What is the legacy of Jewish wisdom and spiritual technology that we can harness to live the best possible life? In this course we will touch the depth and breadth of Judaism's profound spiritual and mystical conversations, which span millennia and which shed a fascinating light on many of our contemporary individual and societal challenges.

We will study text, learn some of its historical and spiritual context, and experience for ourselves many of the spiritual practices suggested by our some of our greatest teachers. The course will include a built-in spiritual havruta (partner/buddy) component and will offer two simultaneous structural approaches to Jewish spirituality: living deeply with the calendar and the development of the Jewish spiritual conversation over millennia. Each class will also have a practice component.



**MIDRASH**  
**LEVI COOPER**  
**Sun., Tues. 2:30-5:00**

**LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE**  
**SPRING**

The Jewish People are not the People of the Book; we are the People of the *Midrash*. More than any other work, it is the *Midrash* that fashions Jewish collective consciousness and makes us who we are today. This path-breaking course will crack open the creative world of *Midrash*.

We will explore different genres of *Midrash*, the historical and geographical background of *Midrash*, the interplay between *Aggada* and *Halakha*, the relationship of the rabbis towards *Midrash Aggada*, how the sages presented philosophical ideas, the continuum between *Peshat* and *Derash*, and more. In the course of our study, we will develop working definitions of key terms, such as *Midrash*, *Aggada*, *Aggadata*, *Halakha*.

The aim of the class is to understand the literary genre, to facilitate engagement with different midrashic and aggadic texts, to develop an appreciation of the genre and its goals, and to empower students to be able to begin to study Midrash independently.

Texts will all be in Hebrew (with a smattering of Aramaic and a dash of Greek).

In addition to the texts studied in class, each student will embark upon a supplementary on a self-study project, choosing a specific Midrash to learn throughout the semester.

What you will need to bring to class:

Notebook and folder for handouts

A Midrash of *your* choice

recommended: Hebrew/English dictionary

**THE CHALLENGE OF ABSTRACT CONCEPTS IN TORAH LITERATURE**  
**ELISHA ANCSELOVITS**

**Tuesdays 2:45-4:15 PM**

**KOLLEL LEVEL**

This class covers the range of traditional Torah literature. It focuses both on learning the skill of interpreting a term or concept in its actual variant uses (a return to authorial thrust) and on finding the commonality of meaning between variant uses (which exists for most of Jewish history).

## **2:30-5:00 Monday/Wednesday**

**HALAKHA**  
**MICHAEL HATTIN (SPRING)**  
**Mon., Wed. 2:30-5:00**

**LEVEL: INTRO./INTERM.**

This course will focus on practical Halakha -- the "what" and "how" of mitzva observance. We will utilize some of the classical Halakhic texts such as Rambam, Shulchan Aruch and commentaries such as Mishnah Berura as we investigate specific areas of practice. Along the way, students will gain basic familiarity with Halakhic codes and how to navigate them.

Areas of study will include Jewish holidays (as appropriate) as well as the laws of **Shabbat (first semester) and Kashrut (second semester)**. Handouts will be provided. There is no expectation of commitment to Halakhic observance.

**SEMINAR IN MODERN JEWISH THOUGHT**  
**ZVI HIRSCHFIELD**  
**Mon, Wed. 2:30-5:00**

**LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL**  
**SPRING**

This course will explore how leading Jewish thinkers address the great challenges of modernity to Judaism and Jewish identity. Issues to be explored will include: Rabbinic authority, nationalism, feminism, ethics, and the goal of being a Jew. Students will be asked to formulate their own views and present them to each other in seminar style.

**RAV KOOK: SONG OF THE SOUL**  
**MIKE FEUER**  
**Mon., Wed. 2:30-5:00**

**LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL**  
**SPRING**

Rav Kook is called one of the spiritual giants of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this class we will explore his approach to Divine service and his thoughts on fundamental questions which arise from learning Torah in a post-modern world. Our focus will be on unpacking these texts in their intellectual and cultural context, but we will also engage them as examples of a life lived in intimacy with the Divine.

## Evening Classes

**HASIDUT**  
**LEVI COOPER**  
**Sundays 5:15-7:15 PM**

**LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL**

Hasidut – or *Chassidus* – is a movement that continues to provide inspiration, fascination, and at times revulsion.

In this course we will walk the spiritual path of Hasidut, meeting central personalities, becoming familiar with key ideas, and developing an appreciation for the historical and social evolution of a movement that has given so much to Judaism, and promises to continue playing a significant role in the Jewish world.

Approximately half the classes will be dedicated to passages found in a foundational hasidic text. In the other classes we will learn about the history, thought, and development of the movement. Hasidic songs – *niggunim* – will also be introduced, discussed, explored, and sung. Sections of the course will be dedicated to contemporary Hasidic phenomena. Each week, participants will be assigned tasks – “spiritual homework” – connected to the passages discussed. The spiritual homework will be completed outside class and then discussed in *havruta* at the beginning of the next class.

**Text:** *Derekh Pikudekha* (to be purchased or downloaded; editions in “Rashi” script can be downloaded from [hebrewbooks.org](http://hebrewbooks.org)).

Sources will be read in Hebrew from the original text and translated.

Hebrew is not a prerequisite; flexibility, openness, commitment to the class space, aims, atmosphere, and vibe are requirements.

**JEWISH MEDITATION: TEXTS & PRACTICES**  
**MIRA NICULESCU**  
**Sundays 7:15-8:30 PM**

**LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL**

Jewish spiritual practices have been at the core of the Jewish tradition for millennia. Reserved to an elite and transmitted orally, they were little known until the middle of the twentieth century. Today, thanks to renewed interest in meditation and the publication of Jewish meditation sources, Jews now learn and practice a variety of Jewish contemplative techniques. In this class, we will explore experientially the world of Jewish meditation, from text to practice. While the main focus will be on modern Chassidut, especially around the work of The Piaczesner Rebbe, we will have sessions on Maimonides, Abulafia, Cordovero, Jewish mindfulness, and more.

**Details:** All levels, co-ed. Each session is comprised of text study, guided and silent meditation, a teaching, and nigunim.  
Class is by donation. Suggested donation of 25 NIS (minimum).

Contact: [miraneshama@gmail.com](mailto:miraneshama@gmail.com) <https://www.miraneshama.com/>

**TALMUD SKILLS INTENSIVE**  
**DANIEL REIFMAN**  
**Mon., Wed. 5:15-7:15 pm**

**LEVEL: INTERM./ADV.**

This course is designed for students who want to develop textual proficiency in Talmud and basic rishonim. We will concentrate on techniques for parsing the Talmud text and constructing the logical flow of the *sugya*, with the goal of allowing students to read an average *sugya* independently by the end of the course. Additionally, we will discuss the way different *rishonim* comment on and seek to resolve problems in the Talmud text. Students should have strong Hebrew language skills and some prior experience studying Talmud.

**TORAH TROPE**  
**ELISA PEARLMAN**  
**Mondays 5:10-6:10**

**LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL**

The word *ta'am* means "flavor" and the *ta'amei hamikrah* ("trope marks") not only show us how to chant each word in the Tanakh, but also add "flavor", i.e. enhance the text, too. During this course students will acquire the tools to chant any part of Torah, while also looking at how the trope functions as an interpretation to the text. We will look specifically at the texts of Bereishit (The Creation) and the portion read at Rosh Hodesh. No previous experience necessary.

**HAFTARAH TROPE**  
**ELISA PEARLMAN**  
**Mon. 6:15-7:15**

**LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL**  
**SPRING**

During this course, students will acquire the tools to chant any Haftarah, while also looking at how the trope functions as an interpretation to the text. We will be looking specifically at the Haftarah read at Simchat Torah.

**NIGHT SEDER (SEDER EREV)**  
**Monday 7:30-9:30 PM**

**LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL**

*Seder Erev* provides a unique opportunity for students to use the resources of the *Beit Midrash* at their own pace, outside the regular hours, in a relaxed atmosphere. Students can take advantage of this once-a-week opportunity to investigate a particular area of interest, strive over the year to complete a *sefer*, or review

material studied during the regular program. This is a sterling opportunity to fulfill the Divine precept of Talmud Torah during the quiet hours.

*Seder Erev* will also provide an opportunity for first year students to study with more advanced students including Fellows and PEP. This is also a chance for people on different levels with common interests to study together. Pardes faculty will be on hand to provide guidance and to answer questions.

**UNPACKING THE SAGES**  
**ELISHA ANCSELOVITS**  
**TUESDAYS: 5:15-7:15 pm**

**LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL**

“You may polish up common sense, you may contradict [it] in detail, and you may surprise it. But ultimately your whole task is to satisfy it.” Alfred North Whitehead

In this course, we learn to read a traditional text, and especially religious legal texts, from the Bible through the Talmud and today by understanding what the author tried to communicate rather than reading words as self-defining. In that way, we learn to discover past people's insights on real life. We use such study, in turn, to learn how to make our own ethical/policy decisions based on inductive and intuitive insights -- rather than by pigeonholing issues into principles or values.

R. Elisha Ancselovits (Yadin Yadin), PhD

**SCRIBAL ARTS**  
**DOV LAIMON**

**LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL**

**Wednesdays 5:15-6:45 pm (There is an extra charge for this course.)**

In this hands-on seminar, students will learn the script used in writing Sifrei Torah, tefillin, and mezuzot, how to make a quill and write on parchment. The course will provide an introduction to determining when a letter is kosher, and how tefillin and mezuzot must be written, as well as an investigation of the deep meaning of the alef-bet in classical texts.