



Course Descriptions 2020-2021 / 5780-5781

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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

ELUL PROGRAM - The Book of Yonah / Jonah

What about this bizarre and whimsical story of a man being swallowed by a giant fish makes it worthy of our attention on such a solemn and reflective day as Yom Kipur? We will engage in a close reading of the verses, in Hebrew and translation, while exploring the text from multiple perspectives - historical, literary, psychological and spiritual.

FIRST SEMESTER – Universal Quandaries and Mythical Accounts

Mythical accounts in the Bible are not what they seem. The first and earliest Biblical stories cover buried treasures of deep universal truths. To what extent can critical human choices make -or break- the foundational edifices of family, community and society? The non scientific account of Creation, the symbolic characters in the Garden of Eden, the pains and gains of sibling rivalry in the story of Cain and Abel, the mystical Ark of Noah and the Flood, and the fiasco of the Tower of Babel are all breeding grounds for new discoveries about what it means to be a fully alive human being.

SECOND SEMESTER – Particular Struggles of Jewish Identity

In the narratives of Genesis – Abraham and Sara struggle with God, with themselves, and with the folks who join as well as leave their family over time. Sensitivity to ethical detail emerges as the primary question which disturbs ancient Biblical writings and brings them into conversation with modern students of text. The choices of our founding fathers and mothers promise to inspire questions about our own relationships with the nations with whom we share the world.

Educational Aims and Methodologies - Students will:

- 1. Significantly increase their Hebrew vocabulary and grammar skills** in order to empower them with a deeper understanding of an original Biblical text
- 2. Acquire tools of classical interpretations and modern literary tools** to enable a more accurate examining of the difficulties and to greatly increase their ability to discuss a Biblical text.
- 3. Consider the interplay of ancient near eastern history** with the Biblical text.
- 4. Discover questions of personal relevance** emerging from the text.

**HUMASH
MICHAEL HATTIN
Sun., Tues., Thurs. 8:30-11:30**

LEVEL: INTRO +

(switches to M/W in the Spring)

Sefer Breisheet (Genesis)

The book of Genesis is about beginnings: the dawn of the world, the emergence of the first human beings and the origins of the people of Israel as told through the story of their progenitors. However, beginnings are often challenging, and the book of Genesis is full of challenges. This means that it may be relevant for us as well!

In this course, we will study these foundational, famous and sometimes frustrating stories as we follow the arc that stretches from the creation of the cosmos in chapter 1 through the drama of the *Akeda* (“binding of Isaac”) at Mount Moriah in chapter 22. Our studies will be guided by careful analysis of the primary text, consideration of other relevant Biblical material, reflection on ancient and modern commentary and attention to personal meaning for ourselves. Along the way, we will work on developing the skills and methodologies that will allow us to pursue our studies with greater independence.

Required texts – a 1 volume Tanakh with English translation as well as the first volume of the Torah Chayim edition of Sefer Breisheet.

TALMUD

LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE

LEAH ROSENTHAL

Sun., Tues., Thurs. 8:30-11:30

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. We will strive to gain a more sophisticated understanding of the history of this text, understand some of the processes which created it, and some of the processes of transmitting it through the generations, all of which left their mark on the Talmudic text we read today. 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 selections from Masechet Sanhedrin.

TALMUD

LEVEL: ADVANCED

ZVI HIRSCHFIELD

Sun., Tues., Thurs. 8:30-11:30

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. We will be studying Tractate Pesachim. In Elul, we will be studying Tractate Rosh Hashana.

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

LEVEL: KOLLEL

TALMUD–MASECHET HULLIN Sunday and Thursday 08:30-11:30 (Daniel Reifman)	HILKHOT KASHRUT Tuesday, 8:30-13:00 (Elisha Ancselovits)
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The Talmud portion of this course is designed to complement the halakha class on kashrut, covering many of the relevant sugyot in masechet Hullin. 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

MISHNA/TALMUD
RAHEL BERKOVITS
Mon., Wed. 8:30-11:30
(switches to S/T/Th in the Spring)

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 Mishna. 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.

HUMASH
HOWARD MARKOSE
Mon., Wed. 8:30-11:30

LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE

This course is designed to bring to the student a greater understanding and appreciation for the text that is called Breisheet (Genesis). 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 a limited level of fluency. They will learn to translate using English translation as well as a basic use of Biblical Hebrew Grammar. No previous background in Breisheet 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 Breisheet 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).

HUMASH
JUDY KLITSNER
Mon., Wed. 8:30-11:30

LEVEL: ADVANCED

This is a skills-based class, designed to empower students to become careful and precise-- and ultimately independent and creative-- readers of the biblical text. The vehicle for our exploration will be the first half of the book of Bereishit. In approaching each narrative, we will conduct close readings, utilizing the tools of literary analysis. These readings will then act as building blocks in reaching a deep understanding of the motives and actions of the biblical characters, as well as moral and theological messages contained in the book.

In our exegetical efforts, we will place an emphasis on intertextual readings, both within the book of Bereishit and between Bereishit and other books of the

Bible. An added goal of this class is to promote proficiency in reading biblical commentary, and to recognize the methods and styles of various commentators.

Course requirements:

Regular, punctual attendance twice weekly
Independent preparation and class presentation at the end of each semester

Recommended background reading:

1. Tanakh, as much as possible
2. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, Basic Books, Inc., NY, 1981.
3. J. Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew*, Second Edition, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1959.

Required Texts, to be purchased:

1. חומש תורת חיים, בראשית כרך א, מוסד הרב קוק, ירושלים, (Humash Torat Haim, first volume of Bereishit)
2. A Tanakh with English translation (Jewish Publication Society recommended)

Recommended purchase:

מקראות גדולות, 5 books of Chumash in 1 volume with commentaries, Horev, Jerusalem

11:45-1:00 Sunday/Thursday

SIDDUR: THEORY AND PRACTICE

LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL

MICHAEL HATTIN

Sun., Thurs. 11:45-1:00

The Siddur is arguably the Jewish people's greatest literary creation. In it are contained not only familiar prayers but an implicit description 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 introduce the content of the siddur as it is 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 overall structure, their historical context and their deeper meaning. Along the way, we will also discuss the basic framing of the service – synagogue layout, the role of the prayer leader and the "choreography" of the service. All denominations are welcome.

JEWISH EXPERIENCES IN MODERNITY

LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL

DAVID BERNSTEIN

Sun., Thurs. 11:45-1:00

HOW DID WE GET HERE? How did Jews become equal citizens, develop denominations, and create a Jewish State? What were the ways in which Jews coped with modernization? How is it that Germany turned on its Jews? In what ways did Jews react? These are just some of the questions that we will deal with in trying to grapple with the major turning points in modern Jewish history, from the French Revolution through the late 20th century. Each class will usually revolve around a primary historical source.

We will also set aside a small amount of time for “Israel as Laboratory,” student reflections on “the good, the bad, and the ugly” aspects of life in Israel.

TALMUD SKILLS INTENSIVE

LEVEL:INTERM. /ADV.

DANIEL REIFMAN

Sun., Thurs. 11:45-1:00

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.

11:45-1:00 Monday/Wednesday

BIBLICAL HEBREW GRAMMAR

LEVEL: INTERM. - FALL

HOWARD MARKOSE

INTRO. - SPRING

Mon., Wed. 11:45-1:00

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.

TALMUDIC HEROINES

LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL

GILA FINE

Mon., Wed. 11:45-1:00

What possessed Yalta to smash 400 bottles of her husband's wine? How does the newly widowed Homa get herself driven out of town? And why must R. Hiyya's wife dress up as a prostitute to show her husband who she really is?

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 *Aggadah* (Talmudic stories) and requires no prior knowledge.

2:30-5:00 Sunday/Tuesday

RAMBAM

LEVI COOPER

Sun., Tues. 2:30-5:00

LEVEL: INTRODUCTORY

Maimonides may be the single most influential Jewish scholar of all time. The fascination with Maimonides – or *MYmonides*, as many seem to claim – transcends the divisions between different streams of Judaism. Indeed, the writings of the Rambam – as per the Hebrew acronym of his name – are filled with gems from an array of fields: Jewish law, philosophy, communal leadership, social activism. It is no wonder that every contemporary faction wants to claim him as their own.

With this in mind we will study key texts from the Rambam's magnum opus, *Mishneh Torah*. Texts will be prepared before class, and then reviewed and discussed when we meet. Parallel and complementary sources will be explored and their implication considered. Special attention will be given not only to the content of the text, but also to Maimonides the person, his style, his contribution, his place in Sephardic tradition, and his singular role in Jewish intellectual history.

This course is a golden opportunity to hone Hebrew skills, as we will examine the sources in the original – and truly accessible – Hebrew of Maimonides (who – like many of us – was not a native Hebrew speaker).

Text: *Mishneh Torah* (the one volume edition with dots is recommended)

Notebook and folder for handouts

Recommended: modern Hebrew/English dictionary

**SOCIAL JUSTICE TRACK/
JEWISH SOCIAL JUSTICE
MEESH HAMMER-KOSSOY
Sun., Tues. 2:30-5:00**

LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL

We all want to build a better world, but how should that world look? How should we get there?

This class is open to all levels. All sources will be provided in both Hebrew and English. Because one of our major goals is to see how Jewish values are being translated into social issues in Israel today, students enrolling in this course are also committing to attend supplementary lectures and field trips, as described below.

What we hope to achieve:

- To define a Jewish Vision(s) of Social Justice through Jewish text.
- To give current and future activists the tools to use Jewish text to inform and inspire their work.
- To learn about the state of the field and the specific challenges in the State of Israel with the help of supplemental guest lectures and field visits.

What we will do to get there:

- A close study of Jewish texts, primarily Talmud and codes, around issues of the environment, economic justice, democracy, treatment of minority groups within and outside the Jewish community in Israel.
- Supplementary lectures by experts in the field, in both governmental and non-profit sectors. Most of these lectures will be during lunch before the class or on Tuesday during "Critical Issues."
- Field trips: many will be on Sunday or Tuesday afternoons (during, before and after class), with a few at other times.
- Students are strongly encouraged to take a leadership role in the community service component of the Pardes program.
- The service component of the Pardes program (Thursday afternoon volunteering) is mandatory.

**GREATEST SUGIYOT OF THE TALMUD
NECHAMA GOLDMAN-BARASH
Sun., Tues. 2:30-5:00**

LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL

This class will examine a wide range of some of the most famous sections in the Talmud in order to appreciate the literary depth and structure that makes up the different sub-units (sugyot) of Talmudic discourse. Rabbinic stories and halakhic analysis intertwine to make up a fascinating and very influential dialogue that has relevance for us today in matters of practice, belief and interpersonal relationships. Students will learn to listen to the voices in the Beit Midrash of the Sages and join their own to an ongoing 2000-year-old conversation. We will examine the sugyot

(topics) with an eye to building a solid Talmudic foundation for future study. In addition to focusing on fine-tuning skills, such as Talmudic terminology and methodology, we will also explore the conceptual framework of each and every topic and, in some cases, the practical legal ramifications as well. There will be a source booklet that everyone will be required to purchase.

THE CHALLENGE OF ABSTRACT CONCEPTS IN TORAH LITERATURE
ELISHA ANCELOVITS

Tuesdays 2:45-4:15 PM

LEVEL: KOLLEL

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).

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

2:30-5:00 Monday/Wednesday

HALAKHA

LEVEL: INTRO./INTERM.

ZVI HIRSCHFIELD

Mon., Wed. 2:30-5:00

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.

STRIVING FOR THE DIVINE

LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL

MIKE FEUER

Mon., Wed. 2:30-5:00

Whether one looks without or within, seeking the absolute is an act of *avodah* – of Divine service. In this class we will focus on the book of Genesis, supported by texts classical and modern. Our goal is to cultivate a language which makes such service relevant to our present lives and communities. Together with the text, we will engage our own dreams and desires as we ask the question – what does it mean to strive for the Divine?

WOMEN & HALAKHA: PAST TRADITIONS & FUTURE DEVELOPMENT
RAHEL BERKOVITS **LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL**
Mon., Wed. 2:30-5:00

In this course, we will explore and discuss women's role in ritual practice, both personal and communal, through the study of classical and contemporary Jewish legal texts. Questions of custom vs. law, societal and historical influences, and future development and change will be addressed. We will examine the topics of women's obligation in and exemption from certain *mitzvot*: *kiddush* on Shabbat, Grace after Meals and *zimmun*, *tefillin*, *tzitzit*, and issues surrounding prayer in the synagogue, such as reading from the Torah and counting in the *minyan*. The course will focus on textual analysis and interpretation. All sources are provided in both Hebrew and English and the course is open to all levels and genders.

Evening Classes

HASIDUT **LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL**
LEVI COOPER
Sun., Tues. 5:15-7:00 PM

Hasidism – or *Chassidus* – is a movement that continues to provide inspiration, fascination, and at times bewilderment or even 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 foundational hasidic texts. 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 a safe but intimate “*spiritual havruta*” space during the following class.

A source book will be available for purchase.
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.

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 the 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.

MEGILLAT ESTHER
ELISA PEARLMAN
Mondays 6:15-7:15

LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL

Learn to chant this special trope in preparation for our annual readings at Purim.

NIGHT SEDER (SEDER EREV)
RAHEL BERKOVITS
Monday 7:15-9:15 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.