



SPRING Course Descriptions 2021 / 5781

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

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

LEVEL: INTRODUCTORY

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.

**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 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.

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.

TALMUD AND HALAKHA

LEVEL: KOLLEL

DANIEL REIFMAN AND ELISHA ANCSELOVITS

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

HUMASH
MICHAEL HATTIN
Mon., Wed. 8:30- 11:30

LEVEL: INTRO +

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.

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 Breisheet. 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 Breisheet and between Breisheet 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

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11:45-1:00 Sunday/Thursday

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

LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL

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 this material – including historical settings, 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 a large narrative section of the Nevi'im, focusing on the books of Joshua/Yehoshua, Judges/Shoftim, and most of the first book of Samuel/Shemuel. This will necessarily entail a fair amount of 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 about four centuries of Biblical history and encounter many of the significant characters and events in the story of the Jewish people!** We will meet two times a week and instruction will be in English. Required text: a Hebrew Tanakh with translation.

RELATIONSHIP INTIMACY
TOVAH LEAH NACHMANI
Sun., Thurs. 11:45-1:00

LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL

We all experience glitches of discord and controversy - not only with difficult people in our midst, but also with those we love - our friends and lovers, our family and even ourselves! A wide range of classic to modern Jewish texts, combined

with innovative reflection exercises and practical paths of application makes this course not just a learning experience, but a journey of transformation.

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

ENCOUNTERING THE DIVINE PRESENCE WITHIN LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL

YISCAH SMITH

Mon., Wed. 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.

BIBLICAL HEBREW GRAMMAR

LEVEL: INTRODUCTORY

HOWARD MARKOSE

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.

2:30-5:00 Sunday/Tuesday

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

LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL

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.

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

LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE

The Jewish People are not really *The People of the Book*; we are ***The People of Midrash!*** More than any other work, it is the *Midrash* that has fashioned Jewish collective consciousness and makes us who we are today. This path-breaking course will crack open the creative world of Midrash – the most significant repository of Jewish collective memory, and perhaps the most powerful tool for fashioning identity.

Midrash is often an unsung hero in the Jewish canon; at times it has even been maligned. This course will situate Midrash in its rightful place as a champion of Jewish intellectual endeavours, literary efforts, and the evergreen quest for relevance and meaning.

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 for key terms, such as *Midrash*, *Aggada*, *Aggadata*, *Halakha*, and more.

The aims of the class are 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.

Midrash Project: In addition to the texts studied in class, each student will embark upon a supplementary self-study venture, choosing a specific midrashic work to study throughout the semester. This undertaking will complement the classes, and provide an opportunity to see the trajectory of a volume of Midrash. Towards the end of the semester, each student will have an opportunity to present material from the Midrash Project.

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

What you will need to bring to class:

Notebook and folder for handouts

A Midrash of *your* choice – to be selected by the end of week two of the course

Recommended: easy access to dictionaries

HALAKHA

LEVEL: INTRO./INTERM.

DANIEL REIFMAN

Sun., Tues. 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.

THE CHALLENGE OF ABSTRACT CONCEPTS IN TORAH LITERATURE

ELISHA ANCSELOVITS

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).

2:30-5:00 Monday/Wednesday

SEMINAR IN MODERN JEWISH THOUGHT

LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL

ZVI HIRSCHFIELD

Mon, Wed. 2:30-5:00

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

LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL

MIKE FEUER

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

Rav Kook is called one of the spiritual giants of the 20th 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.

DAVID AND THE CHALLENGE OF DOMINION

LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL

MICHAEL HATTIN

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

The Book of Samuel describes one of the most tumultuous periods in Biblical history. As the book opens, the people of Israel have struck down roots in the new land but have been less successful at overcoming tribal rivalries in order to oppose the ascendant Philistines. Hope appears in the form of Saul, the first king of Israel, but his short reign is marred by a series of fateful missteps that cause his tragic downfall.

Enter David, arguably the most famous character in our tradition. Rising through the ranks, David adeptly succeeds Saul and then unleashes a process of nation-building that solidifies the monarchy, secures the borders of Israel, establishes the capital at Jerusalem and sets down the foundations for an empire. But who, exactly, is David? Through a rigorous reading of the text of the second book of Samuel and a careful study of the medieval commentaries, earlier Rabbinic material and modern scholarship we will follow David's exploits as king of Israel, appreciating his mighty accomplishments even as we recoil from his spectacular moral failures. Few characters in the Hebrew Bible and the Western literary/artistic canon can rival David for visceral power!

Our goals are to build skills and confidence, to familiarize ourselves with the commentaries and their methodology, and to appreciate the self-referential and

cross-referential qualities of the Tanakh. We will meet twice weekly on Monday and Wednesday afternoons and intend to complete the entire book of Samuel II. Instruction will be in English, and the required texts are the “Mikraot Gedolot HaKeter” edition of Sefer Shemuel that includes the classic medieval commentaries, as well as a Tanakh. Supplemental readings will be provided as needed.

EVENING CLASSES

HASIDUT

LEVI COOPER

Sun., Tues. 5:15-7:00 PM

LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL

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

Monday 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.

HAFTARAH TROPE
ELISA PEARLMAN
Monday 6:15-7:15

LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL

Learn to chant the beautiful melody for the Haftarah. We will be looking specifically at the Haftarah read at Simchat Torah

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
Tuesday 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.

**JEWISH MEDITATION: TEXTS & PRACTICES
MIRA NICULESCU**

LEVEL: OPEN TO ALL

Wednesdays 5:15-6:30 pm (There is an extra charge for this course.)

This class will help students engage experientially with Jewish meditation. After an introductory session aimed at presenting a socio-history of Jewish contemplative trends and giving an overview of the various schools and techniques, the sessions will take the students through an intellectual and spiritual exploration of the rich and diverse field of Jewish meditation.

The class is organized thematically in five units, each composed of three sessions: fundamental contemplative techniques, embodied contemplative techniques, introspective contemplative techniques, ecstatic contemplative techniques, and explorative contemplative techniques.

By weaving text study and practice, each session will invite the participants to experience the teachings directly so that they can integrate them within their daily lives, both on an intellectual, emotional, ethical and spiritual level.

Each class will comprise text study, practice, and a time for questions and sharing. Students will be matched with a spiritual havruta (learning partner) with whom they will share their practice throughout the year.