



Rabbinical School
RB-BIBLE-101:Core Text: Torah 1 Bereshit 2
Rabbi Jordan Schuster

4 graduate credits
Spring Semester 2019
Mondays 2:30pm-4:00pm and Wednesdays 2:00pm-3:30pm

Contact Information:

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Course Description:

In this course, we will delve into the second half of *Sefer Bereshit*, focusing most specifically on the characters around whom this book is structured. We will deepen our understanding of these characters through a precise analysis of the Hebrew Bible's grammar, rhetoric and narratology; through the frameworks of rabbinic midrash and medieval commentary; and through the varied lenses of Hasidut, psychoanalysis, and redaction-criticism. As we shuttle between these modes of exegesis, we will watch our understanding of each character shift, as well as our understanding of how each of these characters relate to themselves, to prayer, to each other, and to G-d.

Learning Objectives:

- To cultivate a deeper relationship to Torah, whether that be a relationship of wrestling, embrace, critique or devotion
- To explore a host of different frameworks and lenses through which to encounter the Torah
- To develop greater proficiency with biblical Hebrew, as well as a deeper sensitivity to how Hebrew Bible uses grammar, rhetoric and literary form to convey meaning
- To become more proficient readers of *midrash*, medieval *parshanut* and *hasidut*.

Required Texts:

Mikra'ot Gedolot (Torat Hayyim)

Assessments:

- Reading aloud
 - For each class, two or three students will be responsible for reading and translating aloud.
 - I will assign readers the evening before class.
- Response Papers to Secondary Readings
 - There will be four secondary readings this semester. I expect you to write a short response paper about these readings, to be turned into me **by 10pm on the night before** we meet for class.

- Prepping Two Adult Ed Source Sheets
 - Throughout the semester, each Hevruta pair is to keep a list of questions that occur to them as they make their way through texts in Beit Midrash. (Maybe you want to know more about how to make sense of Isaac's blindness, Jacob's ladder, Potiphar's wife).
 - Twice during the semester, each hevruta pair is to run through their list of questions and select the most compelling question to pursue further.
 - This question should then be explored through the medium of an Adult Ed Shiur. You will compile and translate **four texts** that address your question in some way (these texts can be drawn from classical, medieval, hasidic or modern sources).
 - After each text, you should also write (and answer) a series of questions that will help to facilitate learners to more deeply engage with the text.
- Midterm Exam
 - Mid-semester there will be a written exam.
 - One section will be on translating a set of texts I provide
 - One section will be on assembling texts around a question I ask
 - One section will be a short answer (250-500 word essay)
- Final Oral Exam
 - At the end of the semester, there will be an oral exam.
 - You will choose ten texts you loved this semester. You will send me a list of those texts ahead of time. For the exam, I will test you on three of those texts.
- Journaling
 - Every other week, you will need to journal on images and ideas from our readings of Bereshit that feel alive to you – that you want to be in dialogue with and “live into.” These journal entries will, I hope, provide you with *drasha* fodder in the future. They will also help you to remember – throughout your career as rabbis – how you were relating to Sefer Bereshit as first year rabbinical students.
 - At the end of the semester, you will write one final journal entry in which you integrate ideas and images from Bereshit into your orientation to life right now – having completed the “bereshit” of your first year of rabbinical school. More specifically, in this final entry you can focus on your revelations this year on how you relate to yourself, to others, to prayer, to the path of the rabbinate, to God. It should be an exercise that combines reflection with synthesis.

Course Accommodations for Disabilities:

Hebrew College is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in programs. Accordingly, if a student has a documented disability, and as a result, needs a reasonable accommodation to attend, participate or complete course requirements, then he or she should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course as well as the Director of Student Support. For further information, see the Student Handbook at http://hebrewcollege.edu/sites/default/files/student_handbook.pdf.

If you require course accommodations because of a documented disability or an emergency medical condition, please email your instructor as soon as possible. We are happy to work with you on any issues you have to ensure that you can participate fully in the class and complete the course requirements. Please do not wait until the assignments are due for a retroactive accommodation, but discuss the situation with your instructor before you experience difficulty.

Course Structure:

2/4 | Review: Abraham, Hagar, Sarah and God

2/6 | Isaac, Rivka and God
2/11 | Isaac, Rivka and God
2/13 | Isaac, Rivka and God

2/20 | Jacob and Esau
2/25 | Jacob and Esau
2/27 | Jacob and Esau

3/4 | Jacob and God
3/11 | Jacob and God

3/18 | Leah and Rachel
3/25 | Leah and Rachel

3/27 | Jacob, God and Esau
4/1 | Jacob, God and Esau

4/3 | Rachel and Weeping

4/8 | Joseph and the Unconscious
4/10 | Joseph and the Unconscious
4/15 | Joseph and the Unconscious

4/17 | Joseph and Weeping

4/29 | Jacob and God
5/1 | Jacob, God and the Nation of Israel

5/8 | Review: The Bible as *Botschaft*

5/13 | Exam week
5/15 | Exam week