



Winter-Spring 2021 Course Descriptions

Hebrew College Me'ah Select

Bringing the Yiddish *Fiddler on the Roof* to Life! *If I Were an Actor*: A Performer's Perspective
Instructors: Amy Lieberman and Cantor Lynn Torgove

This course continues our fall semester exploration of the Yiddish *Fiddler of the Roof*, inspired by the recent successful Off-Broadway production. The fall semester's class is not a prerequisite for this course, which will focus on the elements of the Yiddish *Fiddler* production from the viewpoint of the performer. **What would it be like to be a cast member in the Yiddish *Fiddler*?** In this course, you will learn the music, Yiddish lyrics, acting skills and backstage theater craft that go into creating a performance of "Yiddler." We will explore the history of the Yiddish language and Jewish music of Eastern Europe. Expert instructors and renowned guest lecturers, including Hankus Netsky and Binyumen Schaechter, will teach us what it takes to put on a production of this inspiring musical. As a special *L'chaim*, we will raise a glass and toast cast members of the National Yiddish Theater Folksbiene production of *Fiddler on the Roof* as we gather for a final roundtable discussion!

Dates: 10 Mondays, 2/1, 2/8, 2/22, 3/1, 3/8, 3/15, 3/22, 4/12, 4/19, 4/26

Time: 4:30 - 6:00 pm

Cost: \$325, generous financial aid is available

Location: Zoom

For more information, contact Marilyn Stern at meah@hebrewcollege.edu

Open to all learners. [Register here](#).

Sponsored by Hebrew College

Monday- Maimonides: Rabbi, Philosopher, Doctor and Community Leader

Instructor: Dr. Alan Verskin

Moses Maimonides is likely the most famous rabbi of all time - "From Moses to Moses, there was none like Moses." Today, although medical centers and schools are named after him, few have read his writings. In this course, we will read Maimonides to get a sense of his mindset, life and cultural world. We will read from his enigmatic philosophical work, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, and explore why it was simultaneously so influential and so controversial. We'll read

from his summation of Jewish law, the *Mishneh Torah*, a book that Maimonides boldly said would make the study of the Talmud unnecessary. Finally, we'll look at his responses to letters written to him from across the Jewish world that ask for his help in solving a variety of personal and communal problems, many of which still resonate today.

Dates: 12 Mondays, 2/1, 2/8, 2/15, 2/22, 3/1, 3/8, 3/15, 3/22, 4/12, 4/19, 4/26, 5/3

Time: 9:30 - 11:30 am

Cost: \$335, generous financial aid is available

Location: Zoom

For more information, contact Marilyn Stern at meah@hebrewcollege.edu

Open to all learners. [Register here.](#)

Sponsored by Hebrew College and hosted by Temple Beth Elohim, Wellesley

Wednesday - Maimonides: Rabbi, Philosopher, Doctor and Community Leader (FULL)

Instructor: Dr. Alan Verskin

Moses Maimonides is likely the most famous rabbi of all time - "From Moses to Moses, there was none like Moses." Today, although medical centers and schools are named after him, few have read his writings. In this course, we will read Maimonides to get a sense of his mindset, life and cultural world. We will read from his enigmatic philosophical work, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, and explore why it was simultaneously so influential and so controversial. We'll read from his summation of Jewish law, the *Mishneh Torah*, a book that Maimonides boldly said would make the study of the Talmud unnecessary. Finally, we'll look at his responses to letters written to him from across the Jewish world that ask for his help in solving a variety of personal and communal problems, many of which still resonate today.

Dates: 12 Wednesdays, 2/3, 2/10, 2/17, 2/24, 3/3, 3/10, 3/17, 3/24, 3/31, 4/7, 4/14, 4/21

Time: 9:30 - 11:30 am

Cost: \$335, generous financial aid is available

Location: Zoom

For more information, contact Marilyn Stern at meah@hebrewcollege.edu

Open to all learners. [Register here.](#)

Sponsored by Hebrew College and hosted by Temple Beth Elohim, Wellesley

The Everchanging Passover Haggadah: An Exploration of Jewish History and Identity

Instructors: Dr. Alan Verskin and Dr. Sara Verskin

Generations of Jews have left their unique marks on the Passover Haggadah and used it to tell their own stories. In this class, we will examine Haggadahs from medieval times to the present, from South America to India, looking at what they tell us about the diverse varieties of Jewish life. We will explore the structure and texts of the Haggadah, focusing on those most foreign to modern sensibilities, in an attempt to connect with those communities for whom they were meaningful. Finally, we will have fun discussing parodies of the Haggadah, a genre long used by Jews to satirize oppressors of all kinds – employers, politicians, family-members, and more. Time will be built into class to discuss how these diverse ideas about Passover can contribute to the joy and meaning of our own seders.

Dates: 5 Wednesdays, 2/10, 2/17, 2/24, 3/3, 3/10

Time: 7:00 – 9:00 pm

Cost: \$165, generous financial aid is available

Location: Zoom

For more information, contact Marilyn Stern at meah@hebrewcollege.edu

Open to all learners. [Register here.](#)

Sponsored by Hebrew College and hosted by Temple Emunah and Temple Isaiah, Lexington

Where the Bible Happened

Instructor: Rabbi Neal Gold

A discovery of the important places in the Torah reveals some amazing narratives that connect times and people. If you love maps and geography, you'll get a big kick out of this course; even if you don't, you'll rediscover Biblical sagas in ways you haven't seen them before. Place-names—Shechem, Beit-El, Megiddo, Hazor, Timna, and many more—become a “golden thread” that links the narratives of the Bible. We'll explore the mythic resonance of the Land of Israel and its neighbors, revealed through its geography, flora & fauna, and the people who made it home.

Dates: 5 Thursdays, 2/11, 2/18, 3/4, 3/11, 3/18

Time: 7:00 - 9:00 pm

Cost: \$165, generous financial aid is available

Location: Zoom

For more information contact Marilyn Stern at meah@hebrewcollege.edu

Open to all learners. [Register here.](#)

Sponsored by Hebrew College and Hosted by Congregation Eitz Chayim, Tremont Street Shul, Cambridge

Berakhah--Giving and Receiving Blessings: A course on the infinite power of greeting, salutation and gestures of respect

Instructor: Rabbi Nehemia Polen, Ph.D.

Blessing is a core motif of Judaism. The word *berakhah* in its various forms appears about 450 times in the Hebrew Bible. In Genesis 12.1-3, God's call to Abram (later Abraham) invokes blessing five times, suggesting that Abrahamic religion is based on the invitation "to be a blessing." This course will explore the multiple senses of 'blessing' in the Bible, Rabbinic literature, medieval Kabbalah, Hasidism, and our own world. We will examine how to give and receive blessings; the meaning of 'blessing God'; the special blessing that parents can give children; the Priestly Blessing; blessing friends and strangers; and why blessings are so important in our increasingly impersonal, mechanized world. Classes will include careful reading of classical texts in English, discussion, and a practicum on developing blessing as a skill, a faculty that can be cultivated.

Dates: 10 Wednesdays, 2/17, 2/24, 3/3, 3/10, 3/17, 3/24, 4/7, 4/14, 4/21, 4/28

Time: 9:30 - 11:30 am

Cost: \$335, generous financial aid is available

Location: Zoom

For more information, contact Marilyn Stern at meah@hebrewcollege.edu

Open to all learners. [Register here](#).

Sponsored by Hebrew College

Messiah, Complex: The Jewish Understanding of the Messiah from Antiquity to Modernity

Instructor: Rabbi Neal Gold

Since late antiquity, Judaism has proposed the audacious idea of a Messiah—a redemptive figure that will herald a new epoch in human history. We will explore the development of this idea in its most provocative incarnations: from the Bible, the Talmud, the classical Siddur, and medieval Kabbalah; through Zionism, liberal Jewish movements, Chabad, and modern understandings of *Tikkun Olam*. We will explore how the messianic idea has proved valuable for preserving hope during times of duress, and how it has proved to be dangerous and scandalous at other moments in Jewish history.

Dates: 10 Tuesdays, 2/23, 3/2, 3/16, 3/23, 3/30, 4/6, 4/13, 4/20, 4/27, 5/4

Time: 9:30 - 11:30 am

Cost: \$335, generous financial aid is available

Location: Zoom

For more information, contact Marilyn Stern at meah@hebrewcollege.edu

Open to all learners. [Register here.](#)

Sponsored by Hebrew College and Hosted by Temple Beth Sholom Framingham

Tradition on The Screen I: Divergent Images of Jewish Traditional Life In Film (FULL)

Instructor: Dr. Jacob Meskin

This course involves screening popular American and Israeli movies in order to study a complex and profound issue in Jewish life today. This issue is the fundamental tension between the lives and attitudes of modern Jews, and the lives and attitudes of traditional religious Jews (also sometimes referred to as hareidim, ultra-orthodox, or hassidim). Designed as the first of two courses (each may be taken separately), this course focuses on films that offer starkly different depictions of traditional Jewish life. In particular, these films will help us attend to deep conflicts over issues such as individual self-expression, family, the value of communal life, and the experience of romance and love. Students will screen the films on their own before class; important clips will be shown in class. Carefully chosen academic readings, and short stories will be provided each week, both for background on that week's film, and to enhance the experience of viewing it.

Dates: 5 sessions, Tuesdays, 2/23, 3/2, 3/9, 3/16, 3/23

Time: 7:00 - 9:00 pm

Cost: \$165, generous financial aid is available

Location: Zoom

For more information, contact Marilyn Stern at meah@hebrewcollege.edu

Open to all learners. [Register here.](#)

Sponsored by Hebrew College

Profiles in Leadership and Resilience: Exploring Biblical, Rabbinic & Jewish Historical Personalities

Instructor: Rabbi Benjamin Samuels

This series seeks to find inspiration and uplift in the narratives of Jewish personalities whose encounters with life's challenges serve as enduring lessons in leadership and resilience. Over the course of five sessions, we will interactively study the biblical personalities of Abraham and Sarah; the rabbinic personalities of Rachel and Rabbi Akiva, and Beruria and Rabbi Meir; and the Jewish historical personalities of Moses Maimonides, Gluckel of Hameln, and Rabbi Nachman of

Breslov. Each session represents a study in courage and determination, and our study of all of them together will help us discover and strengthen our own hidden resources of leadership and resilience.

Dates: 5 Wednesdays, 3/3, 3/10, 3/17, 3/24, 4/7

Time: 7:00 – 9:00 pm

Cost: \$165, generous financial aid is available

Location: Zoom

For more information contact Marilyn Stern at meah@hebrewcollege.edu

Open to all learners. [Register here.](#)

Sponsored by Hebrew College and Hosted by Temple Emanuel, Newton

Eight Essential Jewish Thinkers: A User-Friendly Guide to Modern Jewish Thought

Instructor: Dr. Jacob Meskin

This course offers a hands-on introduction to eight of the most important Jewish thinkers in the modern period. They approach the question of modern Jewish existence from a wide variety of perspectives ranging from Jewishness as a secular political identity, modernity combined with orthodox Judaism, and a mystical understanding of Zionism. Some issues we will consider include: the nature of human fulfillment, the relevance of Talmudic thinking to modern life, and the meaning and importance of Zionism. Historical background on each thinker will be presented, along with manageable excerpts from his or her writings. Participants will gain a working grasp of each thinker's ideas. The thinkers are: Benedict Spinoza, Sigmund Freud, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, Martin Buber, Hannah Arendt, Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, Emmanuel Levinas, and Aviva Zornberg.

Dates: 10 Thursdays, 3/4, 3/11, 3/18, 3/25, 4/1, 4/15, 4/22, 4/29, 5/6, 5/13

Time: 7:00 - 9:00 pm

Cost: \$275, generous financial aid is available

Location: Zoom

For more information, contact Marilyn Stern at meah@hebrewcollege.edu

Open to all learners. [Register here.](#)

Sponsored by Hebrew College and Hosted by Jewish Community Center of the North Shore & Temple B'nai Abraham, Beverly

From Purim to Pesach: Stories of Leaders, Freedom, Identity and Choice

Instructor: Dr Susie Tanchel

In this course, perched between the holidays of Purim of Pesach, we will explore texts central to each of the spring holidays. Our study will begin with an exploration of the ever-compelling character of Esther in the Book of Esther. We will focus our attention on turning points in her story, and consider how the themes of choice, gender roles, and power inform the story, and ultimately, alter the course of history. Thereafter, we will turn to the themes of the story of the Exodus by reading selected biblical texts. Here too, we will focus on several key characters' choices and moments of discovery, including the story of Moses. Finally, we will end our class with a close study of the Haggadah by looking at the history and possible meanings of certain key texts. During this interactive course we will discuss and explore many different topics, including identity formation and the responsibilities associated with freedom.

Dates: 3 Thursdays, 3/4, 3/11, 3/18

Time: 9:30-11:00 a.m.

Cost: \$115, generous financial aid is available

Location: Zoom

For more information, contact Marilyn Stern at meah@hebrewcollege.edu

Open to all learners. [Register here](#)

Sponsored by Hebrew College

Old Wine, New Vessels: A Hasidic Master Addresses Today's Seekers: Part Two

Instructor: Rabbi Arthur Green

New students and those who participated in the fall course are invited to Join Rabbi Green for another eight-week exploration of selected texts from his recent translation of the Hasidic Classic *Me'or 'Eynayim, The Light of the Eyes* (Stanford University Press 2021). Rabbi Green will focus on new texts from this remarkable Hasidic work that he describes as "a guide to the cultivation of spiritual awareness and the implications of such awareness and the implications of such awareness of one's emotional and moral life." Participants will connect with the deep spiritual wisdom and healing powers of Hasidic teachings and will explore how Hasidism can spiritually re-invigorate Judaism in today's contemporary world. Each one hour of text learning by Rabbi Green will be followed by a 30-minute Q & A.

Dates: 8 Mondays, 4/12, 4/19, 4/26, 5/3, 5/10, 5/24, 6/7, 6/14

Time: 12:30-2:00 pm

Cost: \$225, generous financial aid is available

Location: Zoom

For more information, contact Marilyn Stern at meah@hebrewcollege.edu

Open to all learners. [Register here.](#)

Sponsored by Hebrew College

Tradition on The Screen II: Challenges and Joys of Traditional Jewish Life in Film

Instructor: Dr. Jacob Meskin

Designed as a free-standing companion course to Tradition On The Screen I (each may be taken separately), this course screens films that explore the profound personal experiences, and struggles, of those living traditional Jewish lives today. Using the films and readings this course tries to articulate -- from the "inside" -- the thoughts and feelings of traditional Jews as they face both wrenching dilemmas, and truly joyous moments. Some of the topics taken up in the films include spirituality and faith, the experiences of women, the challenges faced by gays and lesbians, dealing with other religions, and the struggle to believe in God after the Holocaust. Students will screen the films on their own before class; important clips will be shown in class. Carefully chosen academic readings, and short stories will be provided each week, both for background on that week's film, and to enhance the experience of viewing it.

Dates: 5 Tuesdays, 4/13, 4/20, 4/27, 5/4, 5/11

Time: 7:00 - 9:00 pm

Cost: \$165, generous financial aid is available

Location: Zoom

For more information, contact Marilyn Stern at meah@hebrewcollege.edu

Open to all learners. [Register here.](#)

Sponsored by Hebrew College

Seven Weeks in the Spring: A Journey to the Heart of the Omer Period

Instructor Rabbi Nehemia Polen

The season from Passover to Shavuot is one of the most powerful and resonant in our Jewish calendar. We are invited to count the forty-nine days that join the festival of freedom to the day of revelation. The kabbalists mapped each day onto the sefirot, the cosmic manifestations of divine energy, in seven cycles of seven. Our course will explore the biblical roots of this period, its mystical significance, harvesting as a sacred activity, and contemporary applications for personal discovery, social interaction, and opening the soul.

Dates: 5 Tuesdays, 4/16, 4/13, 4/20, 4/27, 5/4

Time: 7:00 - 9:00 pm

Cost: \$165, generous financial aid is available

Location: Zoom

For more information, contact Marilyn Stern at meah@hebrewcollege.edu

Open to all learners. [Register here](#)

Sponsored by Hebrew College

Cambridge Tradition on The Screen: Divergent Images of Jewish Traditional Life in Film

Instructor: Dr. Jacob Meskin

This course involves screening popular American and Israeli movies in order to study a complex and profound issue in Jewish life today. This issue is the fundamental tension between the lives and attitudes of modern Jews, and the lives and attitudes of traditional religious Jews (also sometimes referred to as hareidim, ultra-orthodox, or hassidim). Designed as the first of two courses (each may be taken separately), this course focuses on films that offer starkly different depictions of traditional Jewish life. In particular, these films will help us attend to deep conflicts over issues such as individual self-expression, family, the value of communal life, and the experience of romance and love. Students will screen the films on their own before class; important clips will be shown in class. Carefully chosen academic readings, and short stories will be provided each week, both for background on that week's film, and to enhance the experience of viewing it.

Dates: 5 Wednesdays, 4/7, 4/14, 4/21, 4/28, 5/5

Time: 7:00 - 9:00 pm

Cost: \$165, generous financial aid is available

Location: Zoom

For more information, contact Marilyn Stern at meah@hebrewcollege.edu

Open to all learners. [Register here.](#)

Sponsored by Hebrew College and hosted by Congregation Eitz Chayim, and Tremont Street Shul, Cambridge

Mission and Message: The Biblical Prophets and the Transformation of Jewish Destiny

Instructor: Rabbi Benjamin Samuels

The roar of Amos. The cry of Joel. The plea of Micah. Have you heard the voice of God raging in the Prophets' Words? The classical prophets of Israel represent some of the most radical, dramatic, passionate, poetic, and powerful messages that our tradition offers. Over the course of five sessions, we will study essential passages from one of the classical prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible. Our sessions will be interactive text-based studies with an eye to both literary medium and moral message. Please have a Hebrew-English Tanakh handy.

Dates: 5 Thursdays, 4/15, 4/22, 4/29, 5/6, 5/13

Time: 9:30 – 11:30 am

Cost: \$165, generous financial aid is available

Location: Zoom

For more information, contact Marilyn Stern at meah@hebrewcollege.edu

Open to all learners. [Register here](#).

Sponsored by Hebrew College and hosted by Temple Emunah and Temple Isaiah, Lexington