



Curriculum Course Descriptions

Talmud

Talmud I: Introduction to Jewish Law

This introductory course focuses on the foundational principles that guide Jewish law, including *lo bashamayim hi* – creativity and independence, *eilu v'eilu* – diversity and dissent, *shelo yehe k'shteit torot* – unity, and *halakha l'moshe misinai* – tradition and transmission. In addition, the course focuses on the sources of rabbinic authority and types of rabbinic legislative activity, culminating in an examination of leniency within Jewish law.

Talmud II: Mechanisms of Jewish Law

This course continues to build upon the foundations developed in 9th grade Talmud, providing students with in-depth examination of some of the legal mechanisms used by the rabbis to legislate Jewish law – including *minhag* - popular practice, *sevara* – logical reasoning, judicial independence, *hilkheta k'batrai*, exploring the legal tensions between precedent and innovation, as well as a more detailed investigation of rabbinic authority, including the authority of the Talmud Bavli and the Shulhan Arukh. This course includes heightened textual and conceptual complexity, building as well upon the technical skills developed in 9th grade Talmud, and concluding with an examination of several ethical and philosophical principles in halakha, including *lifnim meshurat hadin* and *gadol hametzveh*.

Talmud III: Case Studies in Halakha: Women, Community and Medinat Yisrael

This course builds upon the core knowledge of the halakhic process from 9th and 10th grades and applies it to contemporary communal issues that the halakha has grappled with, including the role of women in halakha and the State of Israel. This course explores the categories of *mitzvoth aseh she-hazman grama* – time bound mitzvoth that women are exempted from, the obligation of women in prayer and *megillah*, the ordination of women and the halakhic issues surrounding the *aguna* crisis. In our Israel unit, students explore Talmudic and halakhic *sugyot* relating to *aliyah*, *shemitta*, *kedushat ha-aretz* the establishment of Yom Ha'azma'ut, the Three Oaths, messianism in Jewish tradition, and Yom Hashoah.

Talmud IV: Case Studies in Halakha: Hilkhote Shabbat

This course serves as the capstone to our 4-year curriculum, applying the principles and mechanisms of halakha to in-depth study of *hilkhote Shabbat*. Students explore





the nature and purpose of Shabbat, including the relationship between Shabbat and Yom Tov, the positive commandments on Shabbat – including Kiddush, havdalah and the categories of *Kavod* and *Oneg* Shabbat, as well as the structure and application of the prohibitions of Shabbat. Students are introduced to the categories of *Avot*, *Toladot*, *Melakha she'eina tzricha l'gufa*, *pesik reisha*, *mitasek* and *davar she'eino mitkavein*. Along the way, students apply these concepts to the leniencies and stringencies involved in the use of electricity, operation of motor vehicles and treating sickness and medical emergencies on Shabbat.

Tanakh

Tanakh I: Structure, Parshanut and Morality

Our Tanakh courses adopt the same methodology as our groundbreaking approach to Talmud: Instead of studying a single book or story, we weave together narratives that introduce students to the fundamental ideas, disputes and values that shape the study of Tanakh. Our introductory course begins by exploring the process of canonization through an analysis of *sefer Kohelet*, along with the nature of *nevuah* through an examination of the thought of the Rambam and the commentary of select *parshanim*. The course then explores the differences between *peshat* and *midrash* through a detailed analysis of several narratives, including *parshat Noach*, the sin of the Golden Calf, and Moshe's hitting of the rock, followed by a detailed examination and comparison of the exegetical approaches of Rashi, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, Ramban, and Rambam. The course then concludes by utilizing these insights in an exploration of morality throughout Tanakh, with emphasis on the narratives of Sodom, Akeidat Yitzchak, Slavery and Amalek.

Advanced Tanakh II: Faith, Authorship and Criticism

Our advanced study of Tanakh continues with this capstone course, applying many of the lessons from Tanakh I to a detailed examination of one of the most difficult theological questions of the modern period – Biblical Authorship. Orthodox responses to Biblical Criticism require a combination of Biblical text, midrashic interpretation, linguistic subtlety and comparative analysis – all of which are explored in this course. This course seeks not only to develop traditional responses to Biblical Criticism, but also to deepen our students' faith and ability to grapple with complex textual and theological questions. From a detailed examination of the stories of creation, Noach's flood, and Yosef and his brothers to comparative analysis of Biblical stories with Ancient Near East law and literature, this course spans the thought of *Chazal* and the *Rishonim* - as well as modern thinkers such as Umberto Cassuto, Rav Soloveitchik, Joshua Berman and others - as we weave together text, tradition and critical analysis to explore Jewish faith and tradition in light of modern scholarship.





Machshevet Yisrael

Jewish Philosophy

The newest addition to our course catalog offers an in-depth exploration of essential topics within the field of Jewish Philosophy. Drawing from contemporary thinkers such as Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, Rabbi Eliezer Berkovitz, and Yeshaya Leibowitz, as well as Rabbis Norman Lamm, Aharon Lichtenstein, Shimshon R. Hirsch, and many others, this course offers an essential treatment of some of the most pressing issues that our students are thinking about today. Course topics include an examination of what it means to believe in God, the purpose and efficacy of prayer, the concept of “Chosenness” in Jewish tradition, as well as Religious Zionism and Messianism, among others. This course builds and spirals upon many of the issues that students explore in our Talmud and Tanakh courses, but can be taught as a stand-alone as well.

