The purpose of the course is to learn and discuss the classical Biblical and rabbinic sources and rubrics around key issues of Jewish theology: God, Creation, and Torah/Revelation.

Reading and text preparation are to precede each class. Class is based on the assumption that this preparatory work has been done.

Please note that about half of the course is based on A. J. Heschel’s *Heavenly Torah*. (You will need to buy this book or borrow a copy and bring it to class.) Heschel’s work is studded with textual examples. You are encouraged to look upon Heschel’s work as a way of discovering many important rabbinic texts. Among the sources he quotes are the essential rubrics of rabbinic theological conversation. Get to know them. Read the Heschel before your Bet Midrash, and spend the Bet Midrash session looking up and discussing the Hebrew original of those texts of greatest interest to you. We will refer to the Hebrew texts in class, assuming you have seen them.

Students with strong Hebrew are urged to buy and read Heschel in the original *Torah min ha-Shamayim*, a masterpiece of classical Hebrew style. We will be reading small sections in Hebrew together in class.

You should also purchase or obtain a copy of Yochanan Muffs’ *The Personhood of God*.

**Written assignments:**

1) DUE IN WEEK 4 – Take two of the texts found in the Week 3 booklet and write two one-to two page *Divrey Torah* around them.

2) DUE IN WEEK 7 - A personal reflection on some texts in Unit 5, hopefully based on your own religious experience/reflections and their interaction with these sources. 5 pages.
3) DUE AT END OF SEMESTER – Read the third chapter (“Torah: Word Out of Silence”) of my Radical Judaism and write A) a reflection on the connection between my work and Heschel’s, regarding Torah; B) your own alternative way of using Heschel’s insights in creating a contemporary theology of Torah; C) a personal theology of Torah, based on and/or critiquing Heschel’s or mine. 10-15 pages.

NOTE: If you are dealing with Heschel’s theology, you will also want to read sections of his God in Search of Man.

**Oral presentations:**
Each week, after the first, a student will summarize and lead a discussion of the secondary readings. Please sign up.

1. **God in the Bible I**
   Readings:
   S. David Sperling, “Israel’s Religion in the Ancient Near East” (In A. Green, ed., Jewish Spirituality I)*

2. **God in the Bible II**
   Readings:
   Muffs, Personhood, 55-94.
   Abraham J, Heschel, The Prophets, 195-231.*

3. **God in the Aggadah I: Introductory Sources**
   Texts: Selected booklet** (To be used over three weeks)
   Readings:
   David Stern, Imitatio Hominis: Anthropomorphism and the Character(s) of God”
   ______, Parables in Midrash, 4-8; 97-101.*
   A. Green, “The Children in Egypt and the Theophany at the Sea”*

4. **God in the Aggadah II: Korban, Mishkan, ‘Avodah**
   Readings:

5. God in the Aggadah III: *Shekhinah, Religious Experience*
Reading:
Heschel, *Heavenly Torah* 93-126, 279-288, 303-318

6. God in the Merkavah Literature
Ezekiel 1.
Readings:
J. Dan, “The Religious Experience of the Merkavah”* (In Green, *Jewish Spirituality)*

7. Creation
Bereshit Rabbah 1:10; 3:2; 3:8; 9:2.
Hagigah 12a (*Or ha-Ganuz*)
Tanhuma Buber p. 11
Reading:
E. A. Urbach, *The Sages*, 184-213*
Altmann, The Gnostic Background of the Rabbinic Creation Legends*

8. Revelation in the Bible
Texts:
Shemot 3, 19; 24; Devarim 4-6; Shoftim 13:2-25; Melakhim 1, 18:46-19:14; Nehemiah 9
Reading:
George Savran, “The Visual Representation of the Divine”*

9. Revelation in the Aggadah I: God and the Prophet
Reading:

10. Revelation in the Aggadah II: Minimalist and Maximalist Views
Reading:
Weiss-Halivni, “On Man’s Role in Revelation”*
11. Revelation III: The Unfinished Torah
Readings:
G. Scholem, “Revelation and Tradition as Religious Categories in Judaism”*

12. Israel and Torah: Female and Marital Imagery
Readings:
Green: “Daughter, Sister, Bride: Images of the Feminine”*
Green, “The Song of Songs in Early Jewish Mysticism”*
Elliot Wolfson, “Female Imaging of the Torah”*

- * Available on Schoology
- ** To be distributed – Hard copy