Welcome to the spring semester of Talmud. We are going to complete chapter four of Masechet Brachot and then go on to Masechet Ta'anit. We will move from discussion of the routine of scheduled formal prayer to the concerns of prayers said in times of communal crisis. What do we do if all our requests for rain at the end of Sukkot fail, and we are facing a drought? What are the leaders expected to do? What is the community at large to do? When do difficulties our neighbors are experiencing become our responsibility, and to what degree?

As we tackle the above questions, we will remain focused on building text skills and gaining familiarity with the daf. We will often include Rashi and add in an occasional comment from Tosafot. Please do not use translations, Hebrew or English, for any rabbinic texts assigned in this class. In addition, we will spend some time working with various codes to gain a better understanding of that genre of rabbinic literature and its connection to the Talmud.

Requirements:
♦ Class Preparation - Bet Midrash sessions in addition to private study and English readings
♦ Brief Biography of all rishonim and achronim covered during the semester due May 14.
♦ Exams:
  Two written tests during the semester, one in class, one take-home
  Oral Final

♦ Mid-semester Check-in:
  Post-Purim/Pre-Pesach check-in with students individually

♦ Creative Writing Assignment:
  Write a mishnah and an accompanying sugya in English using Hebrew and Aramaic signal words in which you describe a situation that would call for communal prayer. Describe or compose prayers that should be said and what other actions, if any, should be undertaken. Include "rashi" and at least two codes that provide additional guidelines. The assignment is due on Lag Ba'Omer.

♦ Books required: Masechet Berachot, Masechet Ta'anit, Tanakh
♦ Books recommended: Jastrow, Frank, Carmell, Steinzaltz Reference Guide