Moses is the central character in the Pentateuch, the leader chosen by God to bring the Israelites out of Egypt, lead them through the wilderness, and bring them to the borders of the land of Israel. Moses himself, however, is not allowed to enter the Holy Land. In this course we will study pre-rabbinic and rabbinic midrashic interpretations of and elaborations upon the biblical narratives about the birth of Moses, his defense of the oppressed, his selection by God to lead Israel, his ascent to Mt. Sinai to receive the tablets of the covenant, the various rebellions against him, his placation of God’s anger at Israel, his humility, his frustrated desire to enter the land of Israel, and his death. We will examine midrashic methods and goals, different forms of midrash, and enjoy the creativity and ingenuity of the rabbinic imagination, and in some instances place rabbinic teachings about Moses in the historical/cultural context of the rabbinic period.

The course will be taught in English with English translations of the primary texts. Those who know Hebrew may use the original Hebrew texts.

Course requirements are regular attendance, advance preparation of assigned readings and texts and a paper or creative project.

**Required Texts and Readings:**

- Hebrew-English *Tanakh*


**Other Sources**

- Bialik and Ravnitzky. *The Book of Legends*. (on reserve)

Midrash Rabbah (English translation).

Legends and midrashic exegesis on the following biblical narratives will be read and discussed. Pages in parentheses are from the Ginzberg volumes. Exodus 2 and 3 are dealt with in Volume 2; From Exodus 24 the page numbers in parentheses are from Ginzberg Volume 3. The designated pages from these volumes should be brought to class. There will also be handouts of original midrashim in English translation.

1. Exodus 2: 1-10 (The birth and infancy of Moses). (262-276)
2. Exodus 2: 11-15 (Moses defends the oppressed). (277-282)
3. Exodus 2: 16-22 (Moses in Midian). (292-293; 300-301)
4. Exodus 3: 1-9 (God appears to Moses in the Burning Bush). (304-305)
5. Exodus 3: 10-15 and 4: 1-17 (Moses' commission to leadership and his resistance to it). (316; 317-318; 320-321; 325-326).
6. Exodus 24: 12-18 (Moses on Mount Sinai). (92-93; 106-08; 110; 112-114; 114-116)
7. Exodus 32: 7-14; Numbers 14: 1-20 (Moses prays on behalf of Israel and placates God's anger). (131-134; 278-281)
9. Numbers 16 (The Rebellion of Korah) (288 – 297)
12. Deuteronomy 3: 23-29 (Moses yearns to enter the Holy Land and not to die). (419-452).
Supplementary Readings

The following books and articles are supplementary material which would be useful in writing a paper, giving a dvar torah or for personal enrichment if you would like to learn more about Moses in the Midrash than what we can cover in class.

Adar, Zvi. *Sippurei, Moshe Vehoratam*. YWNb


Embry, B. *The Endangerment of Moses: Towards a New Reading of Exodus 4:24-26*


Moshe Avi Haneviim. BS586 M6 M674 2010.


Vetus Testamentum, Vol. 60, Fasc. 2 (2010), pp. 177-196