

# “The Eternal is My...”

Exploring our Relationships with  
God through Bible and Midrash

A Capstone Curriculum

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## Table of Contents

<b>Rationale .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Curriculum Overview .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Synopsis .....	6
Learner Outcomes.....	7
Enduring Understandings .....	7
Essential Questions .....	7
<b>Note for Teachers .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Hiding From God.....</b>	<b>11</b>
Lesson One.....	13
Lesson Two.....	16
Midrashim for Genesis 3 .....	19
<b>Challenging God.....</b>	<b>25</b>
Lesson Three .....	27
Lesson Four .....	29
Midrashim for Genesis 18.....	31
<b>An Intimate and Transformative Encounter .....</b>	<b>40</b>
Lesson Five .....	43
Lesson Six .....	45
Midrashim for Exodus 33/34 .....	47
<b>Searching for God .....</b>	<b>50</b>
Lesson Seven .....	53
Lesson Eight .....	55
Midrashim for I Samuel 28.....	57
<b>Finding God in the Still Small Voice.....</b>	<b>60</b>
Lesson Nine .....	61
Midrashim for I Kings 19 .....	62
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>63</b>
Lesson Ten.....	63
<b>Annotated Bibliography .....</b>	<b>65</b>

## Rationale

Recent times have seen a significant increase in the levels of adult Jewish learning taking place in North America. Opportunities for learning have grown and diversified as adults are seeking increased Jewish knowledge. Each adult learner brings different interests and learning styles into the classroom, and while each is unique, it is possible to make some assessments about the group as a whole.

Adult learners have diverse goals and learning approaches<sup>1</sup>, requiring awareness and flexibility on the part of the teacher, no matter the topic at hand. Adult learners see themselves as being in a time of change and transition, and it is this sense of change and uncertainty of what the future holds that brings them to “seek new Jewish learning and to redefine the meaning of Judaism in their lives.”<sup>2</sup> The search for meaning is a powerful force driving adult Jewish learning today.

Over the last twenty years, there has been a resurgence of interest in spirituality in America, and a recent survey by Synagogue 3000 shows that young Jews are more spiritual than their predecessors<sup>3</sup>. Meaning-making has taken a privileged place in adult Jewish learning as learners seek to nurture their souls and develop a sense of wholeness<sup>4</sup>. Spirituality can take many paths, but one core path in developing a relationship with God. An important part of a holistic Jewish life includes being cognizant of and reflecting on one’s relationship with God, even if it is not one’s primary spiritual path.

We are not often in places where it is comfortable or encouraged for us to talk about God, or how our understandings of and relationships with God may change over time and

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<sup>1</sup> Grant, Lisa and Schuster, Diane Tickton. “Adult Jewish Learning” in *What We Now Know About Jewish Education*, Ed. Roberta Louis Goodman, Paul A. Flexner and Linda Dale Bloomberg. Los Angeles: Torah Aura Productions, 2008. 161-172. Page 164

<sup>2</sup> Ibid Page 163

<sup>3</sup> Cohen and Hoffman, How Spiritual Are America’s Jews? S3KReport – March 2009, Synagogue 3000 <http://www.synagogue3000.org/files/S3KReportHowSpiritual.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Rabinowitch Thal, Linda. “Jewish Spirituality and Adult Spiritual Development” in *What We Now Know About Jewish Education*, Ed. Roberta Louis Goodman, Paul A. Flexner and Linda Dale Bloomberg. Los Angeles: Torah Aura Productions, 2008. 173-185.

circumstance. One of the consequences of not having many opportunities to speak about God, however, means that we might not even have the vocabulary to articulate our experiences of being in relationship with God, or even know what it means to be in relationship with God. Indeed, the Synagogue 3000 survey “How Spiritual Are America’s Jews?” the matter of language was noted as a significant barrier for Jews in being able to feel comfortable with and articulate spirituality and relationship with God<sup>5</sup>.

This course provides the chance to build such a vocabulary – one that feels to participants both personal and distinctly Jewish, and to reflect on our own relationships with God in the context of the master story of the Jewish People, the Bible. Over ten classes, learners will study five different Biblical texts, each providing a window into a different kind of relationship with God. In Genesis 3, we see God in search of man, as Adam and Eve hide from God. In I Samuel, we see the opposite, man in search of God, as Saul struggles in vain to gain contact with the Divine. Abraham argues with God over Sodom and Gemorrah, Moses has an intimate, transformative encounter at Mt. Sinai, and Elijah finds God not in transcendent and supernatural acts, but rather in a still small voice. Each of these characters affirms a different type of relationship with God, and we may have experienced all or none of them over our lives.

After each session studying a Biblical passage, learners will be able to further unpack the text with the help of classical and contemporary midrashim. The midrashim will serve to deepen the learners’ study of the text and, through their interpretative diversity, will further reinforce the diversity of relationships people can have with God. Additionally, since they are also told in the language of story, midrashim will help the learners to continue to build a shared vocabulary and framework for articulating their own relationships with God.

Often when teaching text, there is a temptation to inundate the learner, to expose them to as much as possible in the time that they are with us. Here, while the study of text is important, so is the need for personal reflection. Therefore, there has been a conscious effort for both the teacher and the text to engage in a sort of *tzimtzum*, of contraction, in order to make space for the voice of the learner. The goal is not to study many texts, but rather to study text deeply, to read text in a way that pushes us to ask questions – both of the text and of ourselves. Carol

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<sup>5</sup> Cohen and Hoffman, How Spiritual Are America’s Jews? S3KReport – March 2009, Synagogue 3000 <http://www.synagogue3000.org/files/S3KReportHowSpiritual.pdf>

Ochs writes that the end purpose of our texts is to develop our relationship with God, and in order to know God, we must also know ourselves.<sup>6</sup> This course will help learners do just that – to reflect on their own experiences and to articulate them in the language of our people.

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<sup>6</sup> Ochs, Carol. *Our Lives as Torah: Finding God in our own Stories*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001. Page 192

## **Curriculum Overview**

### **Synopsis**

This curriculum is an adult education course focused on helping learners reflect upon and articulate their experiences of God, using the sacred stories of the Jewish people to ground and frame their personal understandings of relationship with God. The textual core of the class will be five different biblical passages of Divine encounter/relationship with God. Midrashim, both classical and contemporary, will help learners to unpack and expand the text, using the language of story to validate different conceptions of God and different types of relationships with God. The stories of the biblical characters will help learners reflect upon their own experiences of being in relationship with God. As learners see the diversity of relationships with God that exist in the biblical stories, and the diversity of interpretations that exist in midrash, they will understand that Judaism encourages wrestling with God and developing our own relationship with the Divine.

### **The course will examine 5 Biblical texts:**

1. Genesis 2:25-3:21 -- Adam and Eve in the Garden – Ayeka: hiding from God
2. Genesis 18:16-33 -- Abraham – Sodom and Gemorrah: challenging God
3. Exodus 33:17-34:10, 34:28-35 -- Moses on Mt. Sinai: an intimate and transformative encounter
4. I Samuel 28:3-25 -- Saul and the Witch of Endor: searching for God
5. I Kings 19:9-14 -- Elijah in the cave: finding God in the still small voice

### Enduring Understandings

- Torah is an ongoing dialogue between both the text and its learners and between Jews of different generations (adapted from the URJ Chai Curriculum).
- Studying Jewish texts allows us to explore our relationship with God (adapted from URJ Chai Curriculum).
- A holistic and meaningful Jewish life includes reflection about one's relationship with God.
- Midrashim, both classical and contemporary, can serve to open up passages of Torah and help us make personal meaning.

### Essential Questions

- What is my relationship with Torah?
- What is my relationship with God?
- How do midrashim influence my reading of the text?
- How can I find myself in the Torah?
- How does studying Torah influence my relationship with God?

### Learner Outcomes

- Learners will gain an understanding of the relationships between midrashim and Biblical text
- Learners will read text with a facility that leads to personal inquiry
- Learners will be able to use the language of relationships to articulate their experiences of God.
- Learners will feel empowered to join the multi-generational conversation of Torah interpretation.

## **Note for Teachers**

### **Preparing to Teach**

In their writing on teaching adult Jewish learners, Grant and Schuster outline the many characteristics that successful adult educators have<sup>7</sup>. First, an educator must be a facilitator. You will be facilitating group conversations when studying texts, and as such are responsible for asking questions that spark discussion, drawing out the voices of those learners who may otherwise fade into the background, and balancing the need to make sure that the group stays focused on the task at hand while also being open to following paths of learner interest.

You will be also serving as a mentor to your learners, guiding and supporting them as they embark on their own journeys of reflection and growth. This means being aware of and making time for your learners as individuals and being available for private conversation as they work to integrate their learning in the classroom with their life experiences.

In order to be an individual that adult learners feel they can learn from and turn to, you must also be credibly and authentic. In the context of this class, it means being open about your own questions about text and God, as well as sharing elements of your own Jewish journey and experiences of being in relationship with God (while being careful to not overpower the class and the voices of your learners).

Throughout the course, you will most successful in your teaching if you embody the stance of a reflective practitioner. You should be explicit about looking for student feedback during the length of the course – this helps you to know how your learners are doing, and how you can best support their learning and growth. You can also be open about sharing your own assessment of how things are going, and share with your learners any changes you are making to better meet the needs of the class.

The better you know your learners, the more successful you will be as an educator. You may want to meet with your learners individually before the class begins, to get a better sense

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<sup>7</sup> Grant, Lisa and Schuster, Diane Tickton. “Adult Jewish Learning” in *What We Now Know About Jewish Education*, Ed. Roberta Louis Goodman, Paul A. Flexner and Linda Dale Bloomberg. Los Angeles: Torah Aura Productions, 2008. 161-172. Pages 165-167.



of their background and expectations for the course. If that isn't feasible, it might be useful for you to ask your learners during the first class to fill out a card with some basic information about them, or to dedicate some extra time to sharing stories, expectations, and hesitations (something you should be doing anyway – it's a great way to begin building community).

Ideally, you feel comfortable with these texts by the time you get into the classroom, but there is no need for you to be an expert at first glance! To prepare you might study in chevruta with someone else from the synagogue – make sure you know when the text is referencing another part of the Bible – since none of us know the Bible as well as the Rabbis who wrote classical midrashim did, it can be the biggest stumbling block to understanding midrashim

### **Teaching the Course**

Every group of learners is different, and every teacher is different – to meet the needs of your learners and to be teaching in a way that feels authentic for you, you should feel comfortable adapting the curriculum to meet your needs. For example, while many midrashim are provided as resources in this curriculum, you shouldn't feel pressure to use them all (in fact there are in many cases too many for that to even be an option!). You may decide to only study one midrash together as a group, spending more time on one text rather than trying to cover two. When learners study in chevruta, you can provide them with multiple midrashim to choose from, or you may decide that is too overwhelming and limit their options.

Even as this curriculum provides much room for flexibility, there are core elements that should be maintained. One of the most crucial has to do with the learning environment itself. Learners in this course will be engaged in sacred conversation. Text study is not done only for its own sake, but to provide a light that learners can shine onto their own lives, elevating and honoring their wealth of experiences. In order to create a space where people feel comfortable opening themselves up enough to engage in this sacred conversation, the classroom needs to become a safe space. This needs to be cultivated thoughtfully and gradually over the length of the course in multiple ways, including by providing people the chance to work with a chevruta (instead of having to share their personal reflections with the entire class), and being explicit both about an expectation of confidentiality and the need to build a shared language together.

Class should always begin with an opening exercise that helps learners transition into the classroom space and prepare for learning.<sup>8</sup> You can use the exercises suggested in the lesson plans that follow, or use others that work for your learning community. In addition to an opening exercise (that should be different every week), I recommend beginning and/or ending each class with a consistent ritual that helps to frame your time together as sacred and unique. You could choose to recite a blessing, sing a niggun, ask people to verbalize something that they are leaving “outside” the classroom, or any other ritual that speaks to you.

Another core element of this class is chevruta learning. Working with a partner allows for learners to develop deep relationship, and to study and reflect in a safe space. Still, for many people working in chevruta is not a skill that comes naturally – especially when it comes to studying text. Early on in the curriculum, be sure to provide a great deal of support for learners, providing specific instructions and tasks as they get used to working together and to working through text without an instructor. As the course moves on and participants become more comfortable, encourage learners to be more self-directed and take ownership of their chevruta experience.

Taking time for personal reflection is also a crucial element of this curriculum. There is always so much that we want to do in class that it is easy to run over time and not give learners the opportunity for quiet reflection time. To help elevate the reflection experience for participants, you may want to provide journals, or ask participants to bring their own. Giving learners the option to share their writing with you gives you the chance to engage in more extended personal dialogue that class allows, but you should leave this choice up to participants, so that they feel free to write whatever they are feeling.

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<sup>8</sup> Kessler, Rachael. *The Soul of Education: Helping Students Find Connection, Compassion, and Character at School*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2000. Page 8 – opening exercises help learners to relax and let go of distractions

## Hiding From God

Genesis 2:25-3:21

- כה** וַיְהִיו שְׁנֵיהֶם עָרוּמִים הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְלֹא יִתְבַּשְׁשׁוּ. **25** The two of them were naked, the man and his wife, yet they felt no shame.
- א** וְהַנָּחֹשׁ הָיָה עָרוֹם מִכָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-הָאִשָּׁה אָף כִּי-אָמַר אֱלֹהִים לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִכָּל עֵץ הַגֶּן. **1** Now the serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild beasts that the Eternal God has made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say: You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?"
- ב** וַתֹּאמֶר הָאִשָּׁה אֶל-הַנָּחֹשׁ: מִפְּרִי עֵץ-הַגֶּן נֹאכָל. **2** The woman replied to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the other trees of the garden.
- ג** וּמִפְּרִי הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר בְּתוֹךְ-הַגֶּן--אָמַר אֱלֹהִים לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִמֶּנּוּ וְלֹא תִגְעוּ בוֹ פֶּן-תָּמוּתוּן. **3** It is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said: You shall not eat of it or touch it, lest you die."
- ד** וַיֹּאמֶר הַנָּחֹשׁ אֶל-הָאִשָּׁה: לֹא-מוֹת תָּמוּתוּן. **4** And the serpent said to the woman, "You are not going to die,
- ה** כִּי, יָדַע אֱלֹהִים כִּי בְיוֹם אֲכָלְכֶם מִמֶּנּוּ וְנִפְקַחוּ עֵינֵיכֶם וְהִיִּיתֶם, כְּאֱלֹהִים יֹדְעֵי טוֹב וָרָע. **5** but God knows that as soon as you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like divine beings who know good and bad."
- ו** וַתִּרְאֵהָ הָאִשָּׁה כִּי טוֹב הָעֵץ לְמֵאֲכָל וְכִי תֵאֱוָה-הוּא לְעֵינַיִם וְנִחְמָד הָעֵץ לְהִשְׁכִּיל וַתִּקַּח מִפְּרִיו וַתֹּאכַל וַתֵּתֶן גַּם-לְאִישָׁהּ עִמָּה וַיֹּאכַל. **6** When the woman saw that the tree was good for eating and a delight to the eyes, and that the trees was desirable as a source of wisdom, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave some to her husband, and he ate.
- ז** וַתִּפְקַחְנָה עֵינֵי שְׁנֵיהֶם וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי עֲרֻמִּם הֵם וַיִּתְּפְרוּ עָלֶיהָ תְּאֵנָה וַיַּעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם חֲגֹרֹת. **7** Then the eyes of them both were opened and they perceived that they were naked; and they sewed together fig leaves and made themselves loincloths.
- ח** וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶת-קוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מְתַהַלֵּךְ בְּגֶן--לְרוּחַ הַיּוֹם וַיִּתְּחַבֵּא הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים בְּתוֹךְ עֵץ הַגֶּן. **8** They heard the sound of the Eternal God moving about in the garden at the breezy time of day; and the man and his wife hid from the Eternal God among the trees of the garden.
- ט** וַיִּקְרָא יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶל-הָאָדָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֵיכָּה. **9** The Eternal God called out to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"
- י** וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת-קוֹלְךָ שָׁמָעְתִּי בְּגֶן וָאִירָא כִּי-עֵרֹם אָנֹכִי וָאֶחְבֵּאתִי. **10** He replied, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid."

- יא** וַיֹּאמֶר--מִי הִגִּיד לְךָ כִּי עִירַם אֶתְּהָ הָמֶן-  
הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִיךָ לִבְלֹתָי אֲכָל-מִמֶּנּוּ--אָכַלְתָּ.
- יב** וַיֹּאמֶר, הָאָדָם: הָאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר נָתַתָּה עִמָּדִי  
הוּא נָתַנָּה-לִּי מִן-הָעֵץ וָאֲכָל.
- יג** וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לָאִשָּׁה מַה-זֹּאת עָשִׂית  
וַתֹּאמֶר הָאִשָּׁה הִנֵּחַשׁ הַשָּׂמַיִם וָאֲכָל.
- יד** וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶל-הַנָּחָשׁ כִּי עָשִׂית  
זֹאת אֲרוּר אַתָּה מִכָּל-הַבְּהֵמָה וּמִכָּל חַיַּת  
הַשָּׂדֶה עַל-גִּחְזֶךָ תֵּלֵךְ וְעָפָר תֹּאכַל כָּל-יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ.
- טו** וְאִיבָה אֲשִׁית בֵּינְךָ וּבֵין הָאִשָּׁה וּבֵין זָרְעֶךָ  
וּבֵין זָרְעָהּ: הוּא יִשׁוּפְךָ רֹאשׁ וְאַתָּה תִּשׁוּפֶנּוּ  
עָקֵב.
- טז** אֶל-הָאִשָּׁה אָמַר הָרְבָּה אֲרָבָה עֲצָבוֹנְךָ  
וְהָרִינְךָ--בְּעֶצֶב תֵּלְדִי בָנִים וְאֶל-אִישׁ־תִּשׁוּקֶתְךָ  
וְהוּא יִמְשָׁל-בָּךְ.
- יז** וּלְאָדָם אָמַר כִּי-שָׂמַעְתָּ לְקוֹל אִשְׁתְּךָ וַתֹּאכַל  
מִן-הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִיךָ לֵאמֹר לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ--  
אֲרוּרָה הָאֲדָמָה בְּעִבּוּרְךָ בְּעֶצְבוֹן תֹּאכְלֶנָּה כָּל  
יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ.
- יח** וְקוֹץ וְדֹרְדֹר תִּצְמִיחַ לְךָ וְאָכַלְתָּ אֶת-עֵשֶׂב  
הַשָּׂדֶה.
- יט** בְּזֵעַת אֲפִיךָ תֹאכַל לֶחֶם עַד שׁוּבְךָ אֶל-  
הָאֲדָמָה כִּי מִמֶּנָּה לָקַחְתָּ: כִּי-עָפָר אַתָּה וָאֶל-  
עָפָר תִּשׁוּב.
- כ** וַיִּקְרָא הָאָדָם שֵׁם אִשְׁתּוֹ חַוָּה: כִּי הוּא  
הָיְתָה, אִם כָּל-חַי.
- כא** וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לְאָדָם וּלְאִשְׁתּוֹ כִּתְנוֹת  
עוֹר--וַיַּלְבִּשֵׁם.
- 11** Then God asked, "Who told you that you were  
naked? Did you eat of the tree from which I had  
forbidden you to eat?"
- 12** The man said, "The woman You put at my side  
– she gave me of the tree and I ate."
- 13** And the Eternal God said to the woman, "What  
is this that you have done!" The woman replied,  
"The serpent duped me and I ate."
- 14** Then the Eternal God said to the serpent,  
"Because you did this, more cursed shall you be  
then all cattle and all the wild beasts: on your  
belly shall you crawl and dirt shall you eat all the  
days of your life."
- 15** I will put enmity between you and the woman  
and between your offspring and hers; they shall  
strike at your head and you shall strike at their  
heel."
- 16** And to the woman He said, "I will make most  
severe your pangs in childbearing; in pain shall  
you bear children. Yet your urge shall be for your  
husband, and he shall rule over you."
- 17** To Adam He said, "Because you did as your  
wife said and ate of the tree about which I  
commanded you, „You shall not eat of it," cursed  
be the ground because of you; by toil shall you eat  
of it all the days of your life."
- 18** Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you. But  
your food shall be the grasses of the field;
- 19** By the sweat of your brow shall you get bread  
to eat, until you return to the ground – for from it  
you were taken. For dust you are, and to dust shall  
you return."
- 20** The man named his wife Eve, because she was  
the mother of all the living."
- 21** And the Eternal God made garments of skins  
for Adam and his wife, and clothed them."

## ***Lesson One***

### **Core Concept (for lessons 1 and 2)**

We can sometimes hide from God but that does not constitute a break in the relationship.

### **Schedule at a Glance**

00:00-00:25 – introduction

00:25-1:05 – studying the Biblical text

1:05-1:15 – break

1:15-1:50 – meeting your spiritual chevruta

1:50-2:00 – wrap up

### **Supplies**

- journals (one for each participant)
- JPS Tanachs (or any other Tanach with Hebrew, English translation, and minimal commentary)
- Pens/pencils
- White board, dry erase markers

### **Detailed Procedure**

00:00-00:25 – introduction

- 8 min – welcome, explanation of the course
  - Quick group brainstorming: what are the different roles that you play – over the course of a day, a week, throughout your life? What different relationships do you have with people in these various roles?
    - Possible Answers (PA): parent, boss, customer, employee, employer, child, spouse, subordinate, teacher, student, caretaker
  - Framing: looking at multiple possibilities for a relationship with God – just as we can have different relationships with different people, and our relationships with loved ones can change over time, so can our relationship with God. During our studies, we will be reflecting on our relationships with God and building a shared language to talk about our experiences with one another.
- 12 min – getting to know you
  - Everyone shares their name, why they decided to come to this course, and what they are hoping to gain from it
- 5 minutes – beginning to build safe space
  - Expectation of confidentiality – in order to achieve what we want to here, we need this to be a safe space
  - What else do you need to be able to learn at your best?

- PA: to know what is coming up in the lesson, to be able to “pass,” being able to eat/drink during class, compassion when I get something wrong

00:25-1:05 – studying the Biblical text – Genesis 2:25-3:21

- 10 minutes – our assumptions about the text
  - We’re beginning our studies by looking at what happens between God and Adam and Eve after they eat from the tree. In order to help us get a clean read of the text, let’s begin by sharing everything that we think we know about this story
    - This story has been so colored by other cultural and religious values – these outside forces have really shaped our understanding of the text
      - PA: Eve is a temptress, eating the fruit is about sexuality, Eve is totally duped by the snake, Adam refuses to accept responsibility
- 10 minutes – 2:25-3:3
  - Framing: God placed Adam in the garden, told him not to eat from the tree of knowledge, created Eve out of Adam’s side so that he would not be alone
  - Read together 2:25-3:3
    - What is happening here? Who are these characters? What is the chain of events?
      - PA: the snake is trying to trick the woman, Eve rebuffs the snake,
    - What do you make of the connection between “arum” – naked re: Adam and Eve, and “arum” – shrewd re: the serpent.
      - PA: the text is drawing a relationship between clothing and awareness, the snake is able to act shrewdly (trick Eve) because she is vulnerable (naked)
    - How does this correspond with our initial assumptions? Is there anything that surprises you?
- 10 minutes – read together 3:4-3:10
  - What is God’s role in this part of the narrative?
    - PA: it seems as if the snake was correct – Adam and Eve don’t die, and they become aware of their nakedness so maybe God lied to them, God is present in the garden, God seeks out Adam
  - How does this correspond with our initial assumptions?
- 10 minutes - Read together 11-21
  - What do you think nakedness means in the context of this story?
    - PA: its about vulnerability, its about being comfortable and unashamed, its about innocence (like an infant
  - How does this correspond with our initial assumptions? Is there anything that surprises you?
  - What questions do we have about this text?
    - (Write these down to be saved for the next class, when we will study midrashim on this text)

1:05-1:15 – break (with snacks, of course!)

1:15-2:00 – meeting your spiritual chevruta

- 5 minutes – pairing up the class, ground rules of chevruta – confidential partner that you'll be working with as we unpack and reflect on the texts that we study together
- 10 minutes – listening dyad activity
  - Importance of listening in developing meaningful relationships, and in allowing us to do important reflecting, sharing, and growing over the course of this class
  - Each person has 2 minutes to share, with their partner listening silently. (this will be done twice)
    - First Prompt: Think about a healthy relationship in your life, and describe the characteristics of that relationship
    - Second Prompt: Describe your relationship with God
  - In this class, we will be exploring our relationship with God, using text to help us develop a shared language to talk about our experiences – so if this was really difficult now, it should hopefully become easier by the end of the course
- 20 minutes – reflecting on the text
  - Return to 3:8-10 – what is happening here? What is the relationship between the different players in the scene (especially the relationship between Adam and God)?
    - God is looking for Adam, and Adam and Eve have hidden themselves from God
      - Does this image hold any resonance for you?
      - Ayeka – share a moment in your own life when you wanted to hide from the consequences of your actions.

1:50-2:00 – wrap up

- Reflective writing, with the following trigger: In our text today, God is looking for people who are hiding from God's presence. Describe a moment in your life when you have hidden yourself from God or loved ones. If someone came to look for you, how did that feel? If you feel that no one came looking for you, how did that feel? How did it feel to have someone come and look for you?

I'd like the opportunity to have a conversation with you through your journals, but if you'd rather keep yours confidential, that is also fine.

## ***Lesson Two***

### **Core Concept (for lessons 1 and 2)**

We may sometimes hide from God but that does not constitute a break in the relationship.

### **Schedule at a Glance**

00:00-00:20 – opening reflection/sharing exercise

00:20-00:30 – remembering back to the Biblical text

00:30-1:00 – studying 2 midrashim as a class

1:00-1:10 – break

1:10-1:30 – studying midrashim in chevruta

1:30-1:50 – making midrash our own

1:50-2:00 – personal reflection

### **Detailed Procedure**

00:00-00:20 – opening reflection/sharing exercise

- Mapping our Jewish/spiritual journeys
  - As we prepare to move forward in our learning together, we begin by looking back at where we have been (using an exercise designed by Diane Tickton Schuster, found in Jewish Lives Jewish Learning<sup>9</sup>)
    - write down key dates, people, places, moments in your life
    - what significant connections can you make looking back (either that you were aware of at the time or not)?
      - We'll continue to reflect on our lives throughout the course, perhaps coming to see connections that we didn't realized were there, perhaps coming to see God's presence in ways that we didn't realize

00:20-00:30 – remembering back to the Biblical text

- Reread Genesis 3:8-10
  - What questions do we have about what's happening here?
    - Look back at the questions we wrote down from last class; does rereading this excerpt raise anything new?
  - How do we think Adam might be feeling?
    - Possible Answers (PA): Ashamed, Afraid, Angry (at Eve/the snake), Vulnerable

00:30-1:00 – studying 2 midrashim as a class

- 20 min. - Breishit Rabbah 19:7
  - Read the Text aloud
  - Questions:
    - What questions in/about the Biblical text is this midrash seeking to answer?

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<sup>9</sup> Schuster, Diane Tickton. Jewish Lives, Jewish Learning: Adult Jewish Learning in Theory and Practice. New York: UAH Press. 2003. Pages 16-18.



- PA: How does Adam and Eve's sign impact God, Was Adam's withdrawal only temporary or did it have lasting effect, How does human behavior impact relationship with God
- What relationship is this midrash imagining between God and Adam and Eve (or, more broadly, between God and humanity)?
  - PA: Our behavior impacts God; when we do good things we have the power to bring God nearer; an righteous individual can have the same impact as an entire generation of sinners; God was angry enough at Adam to withdraw, Adam had power of God and his behavior forced God to withdraw
- How does this midrash change or expand your understanding of the Biblical text?
  - PA: expansion of answers from above, relating them to how students originally understood the text
- How does this text relate to your personal experience(s) of "Ayeka"?
  - PA: my behavior caused another individual to withdraw from me, even when I was done 'hiding'; just like God moved away and back again, I know that my hiding from God is not permanent
- Note for teacher:
  - This text contains many references to other characters/events in the Torah; you can decide how much time you want to spend looking up each one and unpacking the different references – if your class is really into text study, it might be worthwhile to spend all of your time on this midrash. If not, you can give enough background so that learners can follow, focusing on the relationship between this midrash and "Ayeka"
- 10 min – "Ayeka"
  - Distribute song lyrics and play the song
    - Ask everyone to share a one word reaction to the song
    - Focus in on the first verse: How do the lyrics describe the scene in the Garden of Eden?
    - How does this change or expand on what we understood from the Biblical text?
    - Look at the first and third verses: Compare/Contrast the relationship between the individual and God
      - What resonates with you? What challenges you?

1:00-1:10 – break

1:10-1:30 – studying midrashim in chevruta

- Each learner is given an additional midrash (either contemporary or classical, written or visual) – study it using the same two questions we asked for the midrash that we studied in class
- Additionally, share how this midrash relates to your own experience of "Ayeka"

1:30-1:50 – making the midrash our own

- Think of your own experiences/understanding of what it means to hide from God. How would you create/adapt a midrash to express that?
  - You can choose:

- to take one of the midrashim that you studied today (either in chevruta or as a whole class) and expand it to reflect your own understanding of “Ayeka”
    - OR to write an entirely new midrash about Adam, Eve, and God based on your understanding and experience of “Ayeka”
  - Each person will do their own midrash, but still use your chevruta as a sounding board and for ideas
  - Does anyone want to share their creation with the class?
- 1:50-2:00 – personal reflection
- Today you had your first opportunity to craft a midrash based on the text that we studied and your own life experience. How did it feel to tell your own story in the language of our people?
  - OR as we return to examine “Ayeka” for the second week, how does it feel to you? Is it easier to reflect on your experiences than it was during the first lesson? What remains challenging for you?

### Breishit Rabbah 19:7

...א"ר אבא בר כהנא מהלך אין כתיב כאן, אלא מתהלך מקפץ ועולה, עיקר שכינה בתחתונים היתה, כיון שחטא אדם הראשון נסתלקה שכינה לרקיע הראשון, חטא קין נסתלקה לרקיע השני, דור אנוש לג', דור המבול לד', דור הפלגה לה', סדומיים לו', ומצרים בימי אברהם לז', וכנגדן עמדו ז' צדיקים, ואלו הן, אברהם יצחק ויעקב, לוי קהת עמרם משה, עמד אברהם והורידה לו', עמד יצחק והורידה מן ו' לה', עמד יעקב והורידה מן הה' לד', עמד לוי והורידה מן הד' לג', עמד קהת והורידה מן הג' לב', עמד עמרם והורידה מן הב' לא', עמד משה והורידה מלמעלה למטה, אר"י כתיב (תהלים לז) צדיקים יירשו ארץ וגו', ורשעים מה יעשו פורחים באויר, אלא הרשעים לא השכינו שכינה בארץ.

Rabbi Abba bar Kahana said: "mehalech" isn't written here, rather "mithalech" (is written) – jumping and ascending. The real home of the Shechinah was in the lower realm<sup>10</sup>. When Adam sinned, the Shechinah withdrew to the first firmament, with the sin of Cain withdrew to the second firmament, with the (sin of the) generation of Enosh<sup>11</sup> to the third, with the (sin of the) generation of the Flood to the fourth, with the (sin of the) generation of the division (of languages)<sup>12</sup> to the fifth, with (the sin of the) residents of Sodom to the sixth, and with the Egyptians in the days of Abraham to the seventh.

But in opposition to these (sinners) stood seven righteous individuals: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Levi, Kohat<sup>13</sup>, Amram<sup>14</sup> and Moses. Abraham caused (the Shechinah) to descend to the sixth, Isaac from the sixth to the fifth, Jacob from the fifth to the fourth, Levi from the fourth to the third, Kohat from the third to the second, from the second to the first. Moses caused (the Shechinah) to descend from above to below.<sup>15</sup>

Rabbi Isaac said: It is written: *The righteous shall inherit the earth and dwell in it forever* (Psalm 37:29). And the wicked, what will they do, float in the air? Rather (this means that) the wicked did not (allow) the Shechinah to dwell on earth.

### Breishit Rabbah 19:10

ויאמר מי הגיד לך כי עירום אתה המן העץ, א"ר לוי לשואלת חומץ שנכנסה אצל אשתו של חבר, אמרה לה מה בעלה עושה עמך, אמרה לה כל טוב הוא עושה עמי, חוץ מחבית זו שהיא מלאה נחשים ועקרבים שאינו משליטני עליה, אמרה לה כל קוזמיקון שלו שם הוא, ומבקש לישא אשה אחרת וליתן

<sup>10</sup> i.e. - earth

<sup>11</sup> The son of Seth (who is the son of Adam) – see Genesis 5:3-6; in Rabbinic literature, Enosh is associated with idolatry

<sup>12</sup> The generation that built the Tower of Babel

<sup>13</sup> Son of Levi, father of Amram – see Exodus 6:16-20

<sup>14</sup> Moses' father

<sup>15</sup> i.e. – to earth

אותה לה, מה עשתה הושיטה ידה לתוכה, התחילו מנשכות אותה כיון שבא בעלה שמע קולה מצווחה, אמר לה שמא באותה חבית נגעת, כך אמר הקב"ה לאדם הראשון (בראשית ג) המן העץ אשר צויתך וגו'.

*"And God said: Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree...(Genesis 3:11)"*  
Rabbi Levi said, (this is analogous) to a woman borrowing vinegar who entered in to (the house) of a wife of a snake charmer. She said to her, "how does your husband treat you?" She said to her, "he treats me well, except for this cask, which is full of snakes and scorpions, that he does not allow me to go near." She said to her, "all of his finery is (in) there, and he wants to marry another woman and give it to her." What did she do? She stretched out her hand into it and they began to bite<sup>16</sup> her. When her husband heard her voice shouting out, he said to her, "did you touch that cask?" So too The Holy One to Adam: *"Did you eat from the tree from which I had forbidden you to eat?"*

### **The Legends of the Jews, by Louis Ginzberg**

Compilation of many Rabbinic midrashim into a single narrative; written in early 1900s  
Translated from German by Henrietta Szold

As long as Adam stood naked, casting about for means of escape from his embarrassment, God did not appear unto him, for one should not "strive to see a man in the hour of his disgrace." He waited until Adam and Eve had covered themselves with fig leaves. But even before God spoke to him, Adam knew what was impending. He heard the angels announce, "God betaketh Himself unto those that dwell in Paradise." He heard more, too. He heard what the angels were saying to one another about his fall, and what they were saying to God. In astonishment the angels exclaimed: "What! He still walks about in Paradise? He is not yet dead?" Whereupon God: "I said to him, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die!' Now, ye know not what manner of day I meant--one of My days of a thousand years, or one of your days. I will give him one of My days. He shall have nine hundred and thirty years to live, and seventy to leave to his descendants."

### **The Legends of the Jews, by Louis Ginzberg**

Compilation of many Rabbinic midrashim into a single narrative; written in early 1900s  
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When Adam and Eve heard God approaching, they hid among the trees--which would not have been possible before the fall. Before he committed his trespass, Adam's height was from the

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<sup>16</sup> Or sting

heavens to the earth, but afterward it was reduced to one hundred ells. Another consequence of his sin was the fear Adam felt when he heard the voice of God: before his fall it had not disquieted him in the least. Hence it was that when Adam said, "I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid," God replied, "Aforetime thou wert not afraid, and now thou art afraid?"

### **The Legends of the Jews, by Louis Ginzberg**

Compilation of many Rabbinic midrashim into a single narrative; written in early 1900s

Translated from German by Henrietta Szold

God refrained from reproaches at first. Standing at the gate of Paradise, He but asked, "Where art thou, Adam?" Thus did God desire to teach man a rule of polite behavior, never to enter the house of another without announcing himself. It cannot be denied, the words "Where art thou?" were pregnant with meaning. They were intended to bring home to Adam the vast difference between his latter and his former state--between his supernatural size then and his shrunken size now; between the lordship of God over him then and the lordship of the serpent over him now. At the same time, God wanted to give Adam the opportunity of repenting of his sin, and he would have received Divine forgiveness for it. But so far from repenting of it, Adam slandered God, and uttered blasphemies against Him. When God asked him, "Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee thou should not eat?" he did not confess his sin, but excused himself with the words: "O Lord of the world! As long as I was alone, I did not fall into sin, but as soon as this woman came to me, she tempted me."

### **Excerpts from "God, Do You Know how I Feel?" from God's Mailbox, by Marc Gellman, 1998**

...When Adam and Eve ate from the fruit of that tree, God kicked them out of the garden right away...Life outside the garden was pretty hard. In the garden, most every tree had fruit, most every day was sunny, and most every animal was nice. But outside the garden, lots of trees had bugs, lots of days were cold, and lots of animals wanted to bite, sting, or squash Adam and Eve.

Because of all the hard, cold, biting stuff that was outside the garden, Adam was sure that God lived only inside the garden. Adam was sad about not living near God anymore, but most days Adam was just too busy to be sad... But whenever Adam wasn't busy, he was sad. Really sad.

In the garden, Adam would sometimes sit all day talking to God... the thing that Adam talked about most with God was his feelings. Adam would see a beautiful sunset, a perfect flower, a fine spider web...or a little fish in the pond. And then Adam would smile a big smile...and Adam would...ask, "God, do you know how I feel?"

Then God would answer in a still, small, voice, "I know how you feel." Then God would kiss Adam with a breath of wind and the two of them would go their separate ways until the next day. Now that Adam was outside the garden...he was afraid that [those talks with God] would never happen again, and he was very sad.

One day in the fields, Adam saw a sunset that was pretty...Adam threw up his hands and hollered into the sky, "God, do you know how I feel?" But Adam heard nothing. Another day, Adam came upon a flower. There were not so many flowers outside the garden but this was a beautiful red one with yellow inside. Adam smelled the flower and smiled. Adam shouted, "God, do you know how I feel?" But still he heard nothing.

...Then one day Adam came to the edge of a clear blue pond. Near the water's edge there was a school of little fish swimming around. Adam sat down on a rock, put his head into his hands and started to cry... soon his whole body was...shaking and his tears were dripping into the pond like rain. Each teardrop scared the little fish as it hit the water. But they swam back to him when the water became still again.

Soon Adam stopped crying...Just then...A breath of wind blew against his face, and dried his tears. And all of a sudden, a still small voice said, "I know how you feel."

"God, is that you?" Adam asked, "Do you live out here?"

God said, "I live everywhere you let me in."

"I called to you so many times," Adam said, "why didn't you answer me?"

God said, "I was always answering you. It's just...you have to listen a little harder to hear me. Things are not as quiet out here...I'm sorry I had to kick you out. Everything was good there, but maybe it was too good... you didn't have to work for anything. Even though things are harder outside the garden, you will appreciate what you have... and you are needed to make things grow and work. Being in a place that's perfect may not be as good for you as being in a place where you are needed..."

Then Adam smiled and said to God, "I know just how you feel." And God kissed Adam with a breath of wind.

**"Ayeka" by Rabbi Joe Black, from the album *Leave a Little Bit Undone*, 1999**

Hiding in the leaves behind the Garden  
Cowering with guilt and fear and shame  
Adam hides his face in his trembling hands  
Waiting for God to call his name  
And the wind begins to stir  
The trees begin to weep  
Old becomes a guest among the new

God's voice cries out in silence with a whisper of the wind  
"Adam," God says, "Where are you?"

Walking hand in hand upon the mountain  
Weighted down by lumber and a knife  
Abraham remembers Sarah's laughter  
And for a moment he fears for Isaac's life  
But then he shudders with the wind  
And fills his head with faith  
Struggles with a different point of view  
He reaches deep inside to find the handle to the blade  
"Abraham," God screams, "Where are you?"

Where are you? Ayeka  
Are you hiding from yourself or from your sin?  
Where are you? Ayeka  
The answer to God's question lies within

Silently she steps upon the platform  
Briefcase filled with nothing at her feet  
Glancing at her watch the train is 20 minutes late  
Cursing her luck she prays for a seat  
And the roaring of the wheels  
The silence in her heart  
Fills her lungs with choking attitude  
She never even heard it when the question passed her by  
Carried by the wind  
"Where are you?"

**“Adam and Eve Reproached by the Lord” unknown artist, St. Michael’s Church, 1015**

(<http://www.tali-virtualmidrash.org.il/ArtEng.aspx?art=393>)





## Challenging God

Genesis 18:16-33

- טז** וַיִּקְמוּ מִשָּׁם הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיִּשְׁקֻפוּ עַל-  
פְּנֵי סֹדֶם וְאַבְרָהָם--הֵלֵךְ עִמָּם  
לְשִׁלָּחַם.
- יז** וַיְהִי, אָמַר : הַמְכַסֶּה אֲנִי  
מֵאַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה.
- יח** וְאַבְרָהָם--הָיוּ יְהִיָּה לְגוֹי גָדוֹל  
וְעַצוֹם וְנִבְרָכוּ-בּו--כָּל גּוֹיֵי הָאָרֶץ.
- יט** כִּי יָדַעְתִּיו לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יִצְוֶה אֶת-  
בָּנָיו וְאֶת-בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשָׁמְרוּ דְרָךְ  
יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט--לְמַעַן  
הָבִיא יְהוָה עַל-אַבְרָהָם אֶת אֲשֶׁר-  
דִּבֶּר, עָלָיו.
- כ** וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה זַעֲקַת סֹדֶם וְעִמֹרָה כִּי-  
רָבָה וְחַטָּאתָם--כִּי כְבֹדָה מְאֹד.
- כא** אֲרֵדָה-נָא וְאֶרְאֶה הַכְּצַעֲקֻתָּהּ  
הַבָּאָה אֵלַי עָשׂוּ כָּלָה וְאִם-לֹא אֲדַעָה.
- כב** וַיִּפְּנוּ מִשָּׁם הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיֵּלְכוּ סֹדָמָה  
וְאַבְרָהָם--עֹדֵנּוּ עֹמֵד לִפְנֵי יְהוָה.
- כג** וַיִּגַּשׁ אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר : הֲאֵף תִּסָּפֶה  
צְדִיק עִם-רָשָׁע.
- כד** אוֹלֵי יֵשׁ חֲמִשִּׁים צְדִיקִים בְּתוֹךְ  
הָעִיר הֲאֵף תִּסָּפֶה וְלֹא-תִשָּׂא לְמַקּוֹם  
לְמַעַן חֲמִשִּׁים הַצְדִּיקִים אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבָּהּ.
- כה** חֲלָלָה לָךְ מַעֲשֵׂת כְּדִבְרֵי הָזֶה  
לְהַמִּית צְדִיק עִם-רָשָׁע וְהָיָה כְּצְדִיק  
כְּרָשָׁע חֲלָלָה לָךְ--הַשֹּׁפֵט כָּל-הָאָרֶץ לֹא  
יַעֲשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט.
- כו** וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אִם-אֶמְצָא בְּסֹדֶם  
חֲמִשִּׁים צְדִיקִים בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר וְנִשְׂאָתִי  
לְכָל-הַמָּקוֹם בְּעִבְיָנָם.
- כז** וַיַּעַן אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר : הִנֵּה-נָא
- 16** And the men rose up from thence, and looked out  
toward Sodom; and Abraham went with them to bring  
them on the way.
- 17** And the LORD said: 'Shall I hide from Abraham that  
which I am doing;
- 18** seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and  
mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be  
blessed in him?
- 19** For I have known him, to the end that he may  
command his children and his household after him, that  
they may keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness  
and justice; to the end that the LORD may bring upon  
Abraham that which He hath spoken of him.'
- 20** And the LORD said: 'Verily, the cry of Sodom and  
Gomorrah is great, and, verily, their sin is exceeding  
grievous.
- 21** I will go down now, and see whether they have done  
altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto  
Me; and if not, I will know.'
- 22** And the men turned from thence, and went toward  
Sodom; but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.
- 23** And Abraham drew near, and said: 'Wilt Thou indeed  
sweep away the righteous with the wicked?
- 24** Peradventure there are fifty righteous within the city;  
wilt Thou indeed sweep away and not forgive the place for  
the fifty righteous that are therein?
- 25** That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay  
the righteous with the wicked, that so the righteous should  
be as the wicked; that be far from Thee; shall not the  
Judge of all the earth do justly?'
- 26** And the LORD said: 'If I find in Sodom fifty righteous  
within the city, then I will forgive all the place for their  
sake.'
- 27** And Abraham answered and said: 'Behold now, I have

- הוֹאֲלֹתִי לְדַבֵּר אֶל-אֲדָנִי וְאֲנִי עָפָר וָאֵפֶר.  
taken upon me to speak unto the LORD, who am but dust and ashes.
- כח** אוֹלֵי יִחְסְרוּן חֲמִשִּׁים הַצְדִּיקִים חֲמִשָּׁה הִתְשַׁחִית בְּחֲמִשָּׁה אֶת-כָּל-הָעִיר וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֶשְׁחִית אִם-אֶמְצָא שָׁם אַרְבָּעִים וְחֲמִשָּׁה.  
**28** Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous; wilt Thou destroy all the city for lack of five?' And He said: 'I will not destroy it, if I find there forty and five.'
- כט** וַיֹּסֶף עוֹד לְדַבֵּר אֵלָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אוֹלֵי יִמָּצְאוּן שָׁם, אַרְבָּעִים וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֶעֱשֶׂה בְּעִבּוֹר הָאַרְבָּעִים.  
**29** And he spoke unto Him yet again, and said: 'Peradventure there shall be forty found there.' And He said: 'I will not do it for the forty's sake.'
- ל** וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-נָא יַחַר לֵאדָנִי וְאֶדְבָּרָה אוֹלֵי יִמָּצְאוּן שָׁם שְׁלֹשִׁים וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֶעֱשֶׂה אִם-אֶמְצָא שָׁם שְׁלֹשִׁים.  
**30** And he said: 'Oh, let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak. Peradventure there shall thirty be found there.' And He said: 'I will not do it, if I find thirty there.'
- לא** וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה-נָא הוֹאֲלֹתִי לְדַבֵּר אֶל אֲדָנִי אוֹלֵי יִמָּצְאוּן שָׁם עֶשְׂרִים וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֶשְׁחִית בְּעִבּוֹר הָעֶשְׂרִים.  
**31** And he said: 'Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD. Peradventure there shall be twenty found there.' And He said: 'I will not destroy it for the twenty's sake.'
- לב** וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-נָא יַחַר לֵאדָנִי וְאֶדְבָּרָה אֶת-הַפֶּעַם אוֹלֵי יִמָּצְאוּן שָׁם, עֶשְׂרָה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֶשְׁחִית, בְּעִבּוֹר הָעֶשְׂרָה.  
**32** And he said: 'Oh, let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak yet but this once. Peradventure ten shall be found there.' And He said: 'I will not destroy it for the ten's sake.'
- לג** וַיֵּלֶךְ יְהוָה כְּאִשֶּׁר כָּלָה לְדַבֵּר אֶל-אַבְרָהָם וְאַבְרָהָם שָׁב לְמִקְוֹ.  
**33** And the LORD went His way, as soon as He had left off speaking to Abraham; and Abraham returned unto his place.

## ***Lesson Three***

### **Core Concept (for lessons 3 and 4)**

Individuals in relationship with God can push back.

### **Schedule at a Glance**

00:00-00:25 – introduction

00:25-1:05 – studying the Biblical text

1:05-1:15 – break

1:15-1:50 – learning with your spiritual chevruta

1:50-2:00 – personal reflection

### **Detailed Procedure**

00:00-00:25 – opening activity

- Opening activity adapted from Dan Wakefield<sup>17</sup>
  - Hand out blank paper and markers/crayons/colored pencils
  - 10 Minutes - Prompt: Think back to the earliest memory you have of feeling God's presence or wondering about God. Draw the physical space you were in when it happened, with as many details as you can remember
  - 8 min – partner with someone who is not your chevruta partner, share the drawing that you made and the memory that triggered it.
  - 7 min – reflect on the activity: how long ago was your memory? Was it difficult to remember the physical space? As you drew the physical space, were you able to remember more?

00:25-1:05 – studying the Biblical text - Genesis 18:16-33

- Framing: Abraham has just been visited by 3 messengers who come bearing the news that Sarah will give birth to a son, Sarah overhears and laughs at the news
- Read 18:16-21
  - What is God's dilemma?
  - How does God seem to understand the relationship between God and Abraham?
- Read 18:22-33
  - What do you make of the dialogue between God and Abraham
  - How do you think Abraham understands his relationship with God?
- What questions do we still have about this text?

1:05-1:15 – break

1:15-1:50 – working with your spiritual chevruta

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<sup>17</sup> Wakefield, Dan. *Creating from the Spirit: Living Each day as a Creative Act*. New York: Ballantine Books. 1996. Page 160-161.

- Sharing our own experiences of bargaining/arguing with God or loved ones
  - How does it change the way we relate to the other? How much does it matter if we get what we want or not? What preexisting relationship needs to be in place before this can happen?

1:50-2:00 – personal reflection

- Respond to anything that happened in the class or reflect on the following prompt:
  - Before Abraham's conversation with God, he is visited by three (Divine) messengers, bearing the good news that Abraham and Sarah will soon have a son. Describe a recent joyous moment – how are your moments of joy connected to moments of challenging/arguing with God?

## ***Lesson Four***

### **Core Concept (for lessons 3 and 4)**

Individuals in relationship with God can push back.

### **Schedule at a Glance**

00:00-00:20 – opening reflection/sharing exercise

00:20-00:30 – remembering back to the Biblical text

00:30-1:00 – studying 2 midrashim as a class

1:00-1:10 – break

1:10-1:30 – studying midrashim in chevruta

1:30-1:50 – reflection/sharing in chevruta

1:50-2:00 – personal reflection

### **Detailed Procedure**

00:00-00:20 – opening reflection/sharing exercise

- How does our relationship with someone change the way that we communicate with them?
  - 12 minutes – Explore this question by role playing with a partner
    - Imagine that your partner has done something that you don't approve of. How do you respond if they are your boss? Spouse? Child? Parent? A stranger?
  - 8 minutes – come back together and reflect on the exercise. How did your response change? Who were you able to most clearly express your disapproval with?

00:20-00:30 – remembering back to the Biblical text

- Reread Genesis 18:23-33
  - What questions do we have about what's happening here?
    - Look back at the questions we wrote down from last class; does rereading this excerpt raise anything new?

00:30-00:55 – studying 2 midrashim as a class

- Questions to consider:
  - What questions in/about the Biblical text is this midrash seeking to answer?
  - How does this text understand the relationship between God and Abraham?
  - How does this midrash change/expand your understanding of the Biblical text?

00:55-1:00 – choosing your own midrash

- Learners can now “visit the midrash museum” and choose a midrash to study with their chevruta

1:00-1:10 – break

1:10-1:30 – studying midrashim in chevruta

- Questions to consider:
  - How does this midrash “hook” into the story? What questions is it trying to answer?
  - How does this midrash change or expand our understanding of what is happening in the Biblical text?

- How does this midrash impact your understanding of the relationship between God and Abraham?
- In what way does this midrash speak to your own experience of bargaining/challenging?

1:30-1:50 – making midrash our own

- You can choose:
  - Based on your understanding of the relationship between Abraham and God, create a modern retelling of the text, recasting them in a contemporary situation
  - OR to take one of the midrashim that you studied today (either in chevruta or as a whole class) and expand it to reflect your own understanding of bargaining with/challenging God (or another individual)

1:50-2:00 – personal reflection

- Respond to anything that happened in class or the following prompt:
  - For the last 4 classes, we have been reflecting on our own life experiences through Torah and midrash. Describe how this process has been going for you, what has been really positive, what is challenging and what you have learned about yourself.

The Book of Legends:

29. "peradventure the fifty will be lacking – there will be only five (Gen 18:28)" R. Hiyya bar Abba said: In his plea, Abraham was about to come down at once from fifty to five. But the Holy One said to Abraham, "Go back to the fifty you mentioned first [and reduce gradually the number of the righteous whose presence would save the cities]." The matter may be illustrated by R. Levi's parable of a water clock full of water: only as long as it contains water may the defending counsel plead. However, when the judge wishes the defending counsel to continue his defense he will say: Add water to the water clock.

**בראשית רבה (וילנא) פרשה מט**

... (עמוס ג) כי לא יעשה ה' אלהים דבר כי אם גלה סודו אל עבדיו הנביאים, אמר הקב"ה אברהם זה ירא אלהים שנאמר (בראשית כב) עתה ידעתי כי ירא אלהים אתה, אברהם זה ישר מן הישרים שנא' (שיר /השירים/ א) מישרים אהבוך, אברהם זה נביא שנאמר (בראשית כ) ועתה השב אשת האיש כי נביא הוא ואיני מגלה לו, אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי משל למלך שנתן אוסיא לאוהבו לאחר זמן בקש המלך לקוץ מתוכה חמשה אילני סרק אמר המלך אילו מן פטריקון שלו הייתי מבקש לא היה מעכב ומה בכך ונמלך בו, כך אמר הקב"ה כבר נתתי את הארץ מתנה לאברהם שנאמר לזרעך נתתי את הארץ וחמשה כרכים הללו בתוך שלו הם ואילו מפטריקון שלו הייתי מבקש לא היה מעכב בידי ומה בכך ונמלך בו, אר"י בר' סימון למלך שהיו לו שלשה אוהבים ולא היה עושה דבר חוץ מדעתן פעם אחת בקש המלך לעשות דבר חוץ מדעתן נטל את הראשון וטרדו והוציאו חוץ לפלטין, שני חבשו בבית האסורים, ונתן ספרגים שלו עליו, שלישי שהיה לו חביב יותר מדאי אמר איני עושה דבר חוץ מדעתו כך אדם הראשון ויגרש את האדם, נח ויסגר ה' בעדו, אברהם שהיה חביב עליו יותר מדאי, אמר מה אני עושה דבר חוץ מדעתו, א"ר שמואל בר נחמן משל למלך שהיה לו סנקתדריס אחד ולא היה עושה דבר חוץ מדעתו, פעם אחת בקש המלך לעשות דבר חוץ מדעתו אמר המלך כלום עשיתי אותן סנקתדריס שלי אלא שלא לעשות דבר חוץ מדעתו, א"ר יודן אמר הקב"ה הרי יש שם לוט בן אחיו ואיני מגלה לו, ורבנן אמרי כבר קראתי אותו אביהם, שנאמר (בראשית יז) כי אב המון גוים נתתיך דנים את הבן חוץ מן האב, מתן תורה גליתי לו, גיהנם גליתי לו, דינה של סדום למחר, ואיני מגלה לו, רבי אחא בשם רבי שמואל בר נחמן בשם רבי נתן אמר אפי' הלכות ערובי חצרות היה אברהם יודע, רבי פנחס בשם רבי שמואל אמר אפילו שם חדש שהקב"ה עתיד לקרוא לירושלים שנא' (ירמיה ג) בעת ההיא יקראו לירושלים כסא ה' היה אברהם יודע, רבי ברכיה ור' חייא ורבנן דתמן בשם ר' יהודה אין יום ויום שאין הקב"ה מחדש הלכה בב"ד

של מעלה, מאי טעמיה (איוב לו) שמעו שמוע ברגז קלו והגה מפיו יצא ואין הגה  
אלא תורה שנאמר (יהושע א)  
והגית בו יומם ולילה אפי' אותן הלכות היה אברהם יודע.

*"For the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His counsel unto His servants the prophets (Amos 3:7)." The Holy Blessed One said, 'this Abraham fears God' as it says: "now I know that you are one who fears God (Genesis 22:12)." And 'this Abraham is upright' as it says: "the upright love You (Song of Songs 1:4)." And 'This Abraham is a prophet' as it says: "now return the wife of this man for he is a prophet (Genesis 20:7)." Am I then not going to reveal to him (my plans to destroy Sodom and Gemorrah)?*

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said: this is comparable to a king that gave an estate to his friend and after some time wanted to cut down from within it five barren fruit trees. The King said, "Even if (I wanted to cut them down from) his patrimony, he would not hesitate (to give his permission), so what can I lose?" And so he consulted him.

So too the Holy Blessed One said, "I already gave this land as a gift to Abraham, as it says: *to your descendents I give this land (Genesis 15:18)*. Now these five towns are in the midst of his (land), but even if I was requesting (towns) from his patrimony, he would not hesitate (to turn them over) into my hand, so what can I lose?" And so God consulted him.

Rabbi Yehudah ben Rabbi Simon said: (this is comparable) to a king that had three friends, and he wouldn't do anything without their knowledge. Once the king wanted to do something without their knowledge. He took the first and expelled him from the palace. The second he put into prison, placing his seal on (the prison door). The third was more dear to him (than the others), and he said, "I won't do anything without his knowledge."

So too Adam – *he drove out the man*<sup>18</sup> (Genesis 3:24) and Noah – *God shut him in*<sup>19</sup> (Genesis 7:16), but Abraham was more dear and God said, "I won't do anything without his knowledge."

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahman said: this is comparable to a king that had an advisor and he wouldn't do anything without his knowledge. Once, the king wanted to do something without his knowledge. The king said, "I only made him advisor so that I would do nothing without his knowledge."

Rabbi Judan said: So too the Holy Blessed One said, "for there [in Sodom] is his nephew Lot and still I won't reveal to him [my plans to destroy Sodom]?"

The Rabbis said: I have already called him [Abraham] their father, as it says: *for I have made you the father of many nations* (Genesis 17:5). Can one judge the son without the father['s

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<sup>18</sup> From the Garden of Eden

<sup>19</sup> The ark



knowledge]? The giving of Torah I revealed to him. Gehenna I revealed to him. The judgement of Sodom will be tomorrow, and I have not revealed that to him.

Rabbi Ahi in the name of Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachman in the name of Rabbi Natan said: Abraham knew even the laws of eruvim in courtyards. Rabbi Pinchas in the name of Rabbi Shmuel said: Abraham even knew the new name that the Holy Blessed One will call Jerusalem in the future, as it says: *At that time they will call Jerusalem the throne of God* (Jeremiah 3:17).

Rabbi Berechiah and Rabbi Hiyya and the Rabbis of Babylon in the name of Rabbi Judah said: There is no day in which the Holy Blessed One does not create a new law in the Heavenly Beit Din. What is the proof (of this statement)? *Hear attentively to the noise of His voice and the meditation that goes out from His mouth* (Job 37:2). "Meditation" can only be interpreted to mean "Torah" as it says: *and meditate on them day and night* (Joshua 10:8). Even these (new) laws, Abraham knew.

### **בראשית רבה (וילנא) פרשה מט**

ויגש אברהם ויאמר וגו', ר"י ורבי נחמיה ורבנן רי"א הגשה למלחמה (ד"ה = דברי הימים = א יט) ויגש יואב והעם אשר עמו לפני ארם למלחמה, ר' נחמיה אמר הגשה לפיוס היך מד"א (יהושע יד) ויגשו בני יהודה אל יהושע, רבנן אמרי הגשה לתפלה, המד"א (מלכים א יח) ויהי כעלות המנחה ויגש אליהו הנביא ויאמר ה' אלהי אברהם יצחק וישראל היום יודע כי אתה אלהים בישראל וגו', ר"א פשט לה אם למלחמה אני בא, אם לפיוס אני בא, אם לתפלה אני בא, רבי פנחס ורבי לוי ורבי יוחנן, זה שהוא עובר לפני התיבה אין אומרים לו בוא ועשה בוא קרב, בוא ועשה קרבן של ציבור, אלא בוא וקרב להתפלל, א"ר תנחומא למה התקינו ברכות חמש עשרה עד שומע תפלה, כנגד ט"ו אזכרות שבהבו לה' בני אלים עד ה' למבול ישב שהוא מכלה את הפורעניות מלבא לעולם, רב הונא בשם רבי אחא, האף תספה, אתה גודר את האף והאף לא יגדרך, א"ר יהושע בר נחמיה אף שאתה מביא לעולמך, אתה מכלה בו את הצדיקים ואת הרשעים, ולא דיך שאתה תולה הרשעים בשביל הצדיקים, אלא שאתה מכלה את הצדיקים עם הרשעים, רבי ורבי יונתן, רבי אומר ב"ו = בשר ודם = חימה כובשתו, אבל הקב"ה כובש את החימה, שנאמר (נחום א) נוקם ה' ובעל חימה, רבי יונתן אמר ב"ו קנאה כובשתו אבל הקב"ה כובש את הקנאה, שנאמר אל קנא ונוקם ה', רבי שמלאי שאל לרבי יונתן מאי דכתיב (משלי יג) ויש נספה בלא משפט, אמר לו בלא משפט מקומו, מעשה באחד שנשתלח לגבות בני טבריא ובני ציפורי, כשהיה גובה בטבריא, ראה אחד מציפורי, עמד ותפשו, א"ל מציפורי אני, א"ל יש בידי כתבים מציפורי לגבותה ולא הספיק לגבות בני טבריא עד שבאת רווחה לציפורי ונמצא נספה בלא משפט מקומו, ר' לוי אמר לדובה שהיתה משכלת כחיה, ולא מצאת לשכל בחיה, ושכלה בבניה, רבי סימון אמר למגל כוסחת כובין ולא שלם לה, שושנה ולא שלם לה.

*And Abraham drew near and said...* (Genesis 18:23). Rabbi Judah, Rabbi Nehemiah, and the Rabbis each commented. Rabbi Judah said: He drew near for battle, as it says: *So Joab and the people that were with him drew nigh unto battle...* (II Samuel 10:13). Rabbi Nehemiah said: He drew near for conciliation, as in the verse: *Then the children of Judah drew nigh unto Joshua* (Joshua 14:6) - to effect reconciliation. The Rabbis said: He drew nigh for prayer, as it says: *And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening offering, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said: O Lord, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel...* (I Kings 18:36) Rabbi Leazar said: Interpret it thus: I come, whether for battle, conciliation, or prayer.

Rabbi Phinehas, Rabbi Levi, and Rabbi Johanan, in the name of Menahem of Gallia, said: When one passes before the Ark<sup>20</sup>, we do not say to him, 'Come and do (your duty)' but 'Come and draw near,' which means, Come and wage war for us, come and offer the public sacrifice [i.e. pray].

Rabbi Tanhuma said: Why did they institute that the fifteenth benediction (in the Amidah<sup>21</sup>) should be 'the one who hears prayer'? To correspond to the Divine Name which occurs fifteen times in the Psalm, *Ascribe unto the Lord, O ye sons of might... as far as The Lord sat enthroned at the flood* (Psalm 29), which restrains punishment from visiting the world<sup>22</sup>

*Will You indeed sweep the righteous away with the wicked?* (Genesis 18:23) Rabbi Huna said in the name of Rabbi Ahi: *Will you indeed* (HA-AF) *sweep away* (TISPEH): You confine anger, but anger cannot confine You<sup>23</sup> Rabbi Joshua ben Nehemiah interpreted it: The anger (af) which You bring upon Your world, You would destroy the righteous and the wicked! You don't suspend judgment of the wicked for the sake of the righteous and would even destroy the righteous with the wicked!

Rabbi and Rabbi Jonathan each commented. Rabbi said: [Abraham pleaded:] A human being is mastered by his anger, but the Holy Blessed One masters anger, as it says: *God avenges and ministers wrath* (Nahum 1:2). Rabbi Jonathan said: A human being is mastered by his jealousy, but the Holy Blessed One masters His jealousy, as it says, The Lord is God [i.e. master] over jealousy and vengeance (literally: *Adonai is a jealous and avenging God* – Nahum 1:2).

Rabbi Simlai asked Rabbi Jonathan: What is meant by the verse, *But there is that is swept away without judgment* (Prov. 13:23)? "It means without judgment on his own town," he answered. Thus it once happened that a man was sent to collect [a fine] from the citizens of Tiberias and

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<sup>20</sup> To lead a congregation in worship

<sup>21</sup> The original Amidah had only 18 blessings. Today there are 19, and this blessing is now the 16<sup>th</sup>

<sup>22</sup> I.e. Israel's prayers stay punishment. The Lord sat enthroned at the flood is understood as a reference to His oath not to repeat the flood.

<sup>23</sup> Translating af, anger, ' and tispeh ' to take away', ' remove,' from asaf, whence 'to dominate'. You do rule Your anger.

Sepphoris. While he was collecting in Tiberias, he saw a citizen of Sepphoris, whereupon he arose and seized him. 'I belong to Sepphoris,' he protested. 'I have warrants instructing me to collect in Sepphoris too,' he replied; but before he finished collecting in Tiberias, remission was granted to Sepphoris, and thus this man was gathered in without the judgment of his own town.

Rabbi Levi and Rabbi Simon commented. Rabbi Levi said: [Abraham pleaded: Is Your anger] like a she-bear ravaging among animals which, if it does not find another beast to destroy, destroys its own young?! Rabbi Simon said: [Is Your anger] like a scythe which cuts down thorns, but when it finds [no more] cuts down roses!?

### **בראשית רבה (וילנא) פרשה מט**

חלילה לך, א"ר יודן חלילה הוא לך ברייה הוא לך, א"ר אחא חלילה חלילה שתי פעמים, חלול שם שמים יש בדבר, א"ר אבא מעשות דבר אין כתיב כאן אלא מעשות כדבר, לא היא ולא דכוותה, ולא דפחותה מינה, א"ר לוי שני בני אדם אמרו דבר אחד, אברהם ואיוב, אברהם חלילה לך מעשות כדבר הזה להמית צדיק עם רשע, איוב אמר (איוב ט) אחת היא על כן אמרתי תם ורשע הוא מכלה, אברהם נטל עליה שכר, איוב נענש עליה, אברהם אמר בישולה, איוב אמר פגה, אחת היא על כן אמרתי תם ורשע הוא מכלה, ר' חייא בר אבא אמר עירבובי שאילות יש כאן, אברהם אמר חלילה לך מעשות כדבר הזה להמית צדיק עם רשע, והקב"ה אומר והיה כצדיק כרשע, יתלה לרשעים בשביל צדיקים, הלואי צדיקים דהא אינם אלא צדיקים ניבלי, דאמר רבי יוחנן כל צדיקים שנאמרו בסדום צדיקים כתיב, היא דעתיה דר' יוחנן דא"ר יוחנן (יהושע ט) ויאמרו אלינו זקננו וכל יושבי ארצנו זקננו כתיב, זקני אשמה, היינו סבא דבהתא, א"ר יהושע בן לוי אמר אברהם צרף מעשי ויעלו למנין חמשים, א"ר יהודה בר' סימון לא את הוא צדיקו של עולם צרף עצמך עמהם ויעלו למנין חמשים אר"י בר' סימון כך אמר ליה אברהם מלך ב"ו תולין לו אנקליטון מדוכוס לאפרכוס, מאפרכוס לאסטרליטוס, ואת בשביל שאין לך מי שיתלה לך אנקליטון, לא תעשה משפט, אר"י בר' סימון כשבקשת לדון את עולמך מסרת אותו ביד שנים רומוס ורומילוס, שאם בקש אחד מהם לעשות דבר, חבירו מעכב על ידו, ואת בשביל שאין לך מי שיעכב על ידך לא תעשה משפט, אמר ר' אדא נשבעת שאין אתה מביא מבול לעולם מה את מערים על השבועה מבול של מים אין אתה מביא, מבול של אש את מביא אם כן לא יצאת ידי שבועה, אמר רבי לוי השופט כל הארץ לא יעשה משפט, אם עולם אתה מבקש אין דין, ואם דין אתה מבקש לית עולם, את תפיס חבלא בתרין ראשין, בעי עלמא ובעי דינא, אם לית את מוותר ציבחר, לית עלמא יכיל קאים, א"ל הקב"ה אברהם (תהלים מה) אהבת צדק ותשנא רשע, אהבת לצדק את בריותי ותשנא רשע, מאנת לחייבן, ע"כ משחך אלהים אלהיך שמן ששון מחבריד, מהו מחבריד מנח ועד אצלך יי דורות ומכלם לא דברתי עם אחד מהם אלא עמך, ויאמר ה' אל אברם לך לך.

*"Far be it from you (Halilah-Lach) (Genesis 18:25)."* Rabbi Judan interpreted (the verse in this way): It is a profanation (halalah) for You, it is alien to Your nature. Rabbi Aha said: *Halilah* is written twice, implying that such action would profane (hilal) the Divine Name. Rabbi Abba said: It isn't written here 'to do this,' rather '*to do such a thing*' is written: neither this nor anything like it nor anything even of a lesser nature.

Rabbi Levi said: Two men said the same thing - Abraham and Job. Abraham said : *Far be it from You to do such a thing, to bring death upon the righteous along with the wicked* (Genesis 28:25) Job said: *It is all one; therefore I say: He destroys the innocent and the wicked* (Job 9:22). Yet Abraham was rewarded for it, while Job was punished for it! The reason is because Abraham said it in confirmation<sup>24</sup>, while Job said it in cavil: *It is all one!* Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba said: We have here a merging of answers. This Abraham said: *Far be it from You*, to which God replied: *so shall the wicked be as the righteous!* You desire that judgment of the wicked should be suspended for the sake of the righteous; but are they righteous? Surely they are but counterfeit righteous! For Rabbi Johanan said: Wherever *tzaddikim* (righteous) occurs in connection with Sodom, it is spelled defectively.<sup>25</sup>

That corresponds with Rabbi Johanan's view, for Rabbi Johanan said: *And our elders (zekenenu) and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us* (Joshua 9:11). It is spelled *zekenenu* intimating that they were elders in wrongdoing, elders (or chiefs) in wickedness.

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said: [Abraham pleaded,] 'Combine their good deeds, and so they will amount to fifty.' Rabbi Judah ben Rabbi Simon said: [Abraham pleaded:] 'Are You not the Righteous One of the universe? Combine Yourself with them and they will amount to fifty.' Rabbi Judah ben Rabbi Simon said: [Abraham pleaded thus:] 'Even in the case of a human judge, an appeal can be made from the commander to the prefect and from the prefect to the governor; but You, because no appeal can be made from Your judgment, will You not do justly?' Rabbi Judah said further: When You desired to judge Your world, You entrusted it to two, Romulus and Remus<sup>26</sup>, so that if one wished to do something the other could veto him; while You, because there is no one to veto You, will You not do justly?

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<sup>24</sup> I.e. surely God is not so unjust as to slay the righteous with the wicked!

<sup>25</sup> "צדיקים" and not "צדיקים"

<sup>26</sup> The legendary founders of Rome. They are mentioned because Rome did appear as God's instrument for punishing the world. Or possibly this is a reference to the early Roman system of dyarchy, under which a duumvirate ruled, and appeal could be made from the decision of one to the other.

Rabbi Aha said: [Abraham pleaded:] ' You have sworn not to bring a deluge upon the world. Would You evade Your own oath! Not a deluge of water will You bring but a deluge of fire? Then You have not acted according to Your oath. Rabbi Levi commented: *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do justly* (Genesis 18:25)? If You want the world to endure, there can be no absolutely strict judgment, while if You want absolutely strict judgment, the world cannot endure, yet You would hold the cord by both ends, desiring both the world and absolute judgment! Unless You release a little, the world cannot endure.

Said the Holy Blessed One to Abraham: *You love righteousness* (Psalm 45:8): You have loved to justify My creatures; *and hate wickedness*: you have refused to condemn them. *Therefore God, your God, has chosen to anoint you with oils of gladness over all your peers* (ibid). From Noah to You were ten generations, and out of all of them I spoke to You alone.

### **בראשית רבה (וילנא) פרשה מט**

“יד וילך ה' כאשר כלה לדבר אל אברהם”, הדיין הזה כל זמן שהסניגור מלמד הוא ממתין, נשתתק הסניגור עמד לו הדיין, כך וילך ה' כאשר כלה לדבר אל אברהם, הסניגור הזה כל זמן שהדיין מסביר לו פנים הוא מלמד, עמד לו הדיין נשתתק הסניגור, כך וילך ה' כאשר כלה לדבר אל אברהם, וכתוב ואברהם שב למקומו, הקטיגור הזה כל זמן שהסניגור מלמד והדיין מסביר לו פנים ממתין עמד לו הדיין נשתתק הסניגור והמקטרג הולך לעשות שליחותו, כך וילך ה' וכתוב ויבואו שני המלאכים סדומה בערב.

Midrash Rabbah - Genesis XLIX:14

*When Adonai had finished speaking to Abraham, He departed* (Genesis 18:33). A judge waits as long as the advocate is pleading; when the advocate becomes silent, the judge rises [to go]. Similarly, *when Adonai had finished speaking to Abraham, He departed*. Again, an advocate goes on pleading as long as the judge is willing to pay attention to him, but when the judge rises to go, the advocate becomes silent. Thus, *when Adonai had finished speaking to Abraham, He departed and Abraham returned to his place* (Genesis 18:33). Again, as long as the defender pleads and the judge shows himself willing to hear, the accuser waits; when the judge rises and the advocate is silent, the accuser sets forth on his mission. Similarly: *when Adonai had finished speaking to Abraham, He departed and Abraham returned to his place*. This is followed by, *And the two angels came to Sodom at evening* (Genesis 19:1).

## **The Legends of the Jews – Louis Ginzberg**

[http://philologos.org/\\_eb-loti/vol1/five2.htm#7](http://philologos.org/_eb-loti/vol1/five2.htm#7)

Like a compassionate father, Abraham importuned the grace of God in behalf of the sinners. He spoke to God, and said: "Thou didst take an oath that no more should all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood. Is it meet that Thou shouldst evade Thy oath and destroy cities by fire? Shall the Judge of all the earth not do right Himself? Verily, if Thou desirest to maintain the world, Thou must give up the strict line of justice. If Thou insistest upon the right alone, there can be no world." Whereupon God said to Abraham: "Thou takest delight in defending My creatures, and thou wouldst not call them guilty. Therefore I spoke with none but thee during the ten generations since Noah." Abraham ventured to use still stronger words in order to secure the safety of the godless. "That be far from Thee," he said, "to slay the righteous with the wicked, that the dwellers on the earth say not, 'It is His trade to destroy the generations of men in a cruel manner; for He destroyed the generation of Enosh, then the generation of the flood, and then He sent the confusion of tongues. He sticks ever to His trade.' "

God made reply: "I will let all the generations I have destroyed pass before thee, that thou mayest see they have not suffered the extreme punishment they deserved. But if thou thinkest that I did not act justly, then instruct thou Me in what I must do, and I will endeavor to act in accordance with thy words." And Abraham had to admit that God had not diminished in aught the justice due to every creature in this world or the other world. Nevertheless he continued to speak, and he said: "Wilt Thou consume the cities, if there be ten righteous men in each?" And God said, "No, if I find fifty righteous therein, I will not destroy the cities."

Abraham: "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, I who would have been turned long since into dust of the ground by Amraphel and into ashes by Nimrod, had it not been for Thy grace. Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous for Zoar, the smallest of the five cities. Wilt Thou destroy all the city for lack of five?"

God: "I will not destroy it, if I find there forty and five."

Abraham: "Peradventure there be ten pious in each of the four cities, then forgive Zoar in Thy grace, for its sins are not so great in number as the sins of the others."

God granted his petition, yet Abraham continued to plead, and he asked whether God would not be satisfied if there were but thirty righteous, ten in each of the three larger cities, and would pardon the two smaller ones, even though there were no righteous therein, whose merits would intercede for them. This, too, the Lord granted, and furthermore He promised not to destroy the cities if but twenty righteous were found therein; yes, God conceded that He would preserve the five cities for the sake of ten righteous therein. More than this Abraham did not ask, for he knew that eight righteous ones, Noah and his wife, and his three sons and their wives, had not sufficed to avert the doom of the generation of the flood, and furthermore he hoped that Lot, his wife, and their four daughters, together with the husbands of their

daughters, would make up the number ten. What he did not know was that even the righteous in these sin-laden cities, though better than the rest, were far from good.

Abraham did not cease to pray for the deliverance of the sinners even after the Shekinah had removed from him. But his supplications and his intercessions were in vain. For fifty-two years God had warned the godless; He had made mountains to quake and tremble. But they hearkened not unto the voice of admonition. They persisted in their sins, and their well-merited punishment overtook them. God forgives all sins, only not an immoral life. And as all these sinners led a life of debauchery, they were burnt with fire.

## An Intimate and Transformative Encounter

Exodus 33:17-23, Exodus 34:1-8, 28-35

- יז וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה גַּם אֶת-  
הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ אֲעָשֶׂה כִּי-  
מִצָּאתְךָ חֵן בְּעֵינַי וְאֶדְעָךָ בְּשֵׁם.
- יח וַיֹּאמֶר : הֲרָאֵנִי נָא אֶת-כְּבוֹדְךָ.
- יט וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי אֵעָבִיר כָּל-טוֹבִי עַל-  
פָּנֶיךָ וְקָרָאתִי בְשֵׁם יְהוָה לְפָנֶיךָ  
וְחִנַּתִּי אֶת-אֲשֶׁר אַחֲוִן וְרַחֲמֹתַי אֶת-  
אֲשֶׁר אֲרַחֵם.
- כ וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא תוּכַל לִרְאוֹת אֶת-פָּנַי  
כִּי לֹא-יִרְאֵנִי הָאָדָם וְחָי.
- כא וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה הִנֵּה מָקוֹם אֲתִי  
וְנִצַּבְתָּ עַל-הַצּוּר.
- כב וְהָיָה בְּעָבֶר כְּבוֹדִי וְשִׁמְתִּיד  
בְּנִקְרַת הַצּוּר וְשִׁכַּתִּי כַּפִּי עָלֶיךָ עַד-  
עָבְרִי.
- כג וְהִסַּרְתִּי אֶת-כַּפִּי וְרָאִיתָ אֶת-  
אַחֲרִי וּפָנַי לֹא יֵרָאוּ.
- א וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה פֶּסֶל-לֶךְ  
שְׁנֵי-לַחַת אֲבָנִים כְּרָאשֵׁינִים וְכַתְּבָתִּי  
עַל-הַלַּחַת אֶת-הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ  
עַל-הַלַּחַת הָרָאשֵׁינִים אֲשֶׁר שִׁבַּרְתָּ.
- ב וְהָיָה נָכוֹן לִבְקֹר וְעֲלִיתָ בִּבְקֹר אֶל-  
הַר סִינַי וְנִצַּבְתָּ לִּי שָׁם עַל-רֹאשׁ  
הָהָר.
- ג וְאִישׁ לֹא-יַעֲלֶה עִמָּךְ וְגַם-אִישׁ אֶל-  
יָרֵא בְּכָל-הָהָר גַּם-הַצֹּאן וְהַבְּקָר אֶל-  
יָרְעוּ אֶל-מוֹל הָהָר הַהוּא.
- ד וַיִּפְסֹל שְׁנֵי-לַחַת אֲבָנִים כְּרָאשֵׁינִים  
וַיִּשָּׂכֶם מֹשֶׁה בִּבְקֹר וַיַּעַל אֶל-הַר סִינַי  
כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה, אֹתוֹ וַיִּקַּח בְּיָדוֹ  
שְׁנֵי לַחַת אֲבָנִים.
- ה וַיֵּרֶד יְהוָה בְּעָנָן וַיִּתְּצַב עִמּוֹ שָׁם
- 17 And the LORD said unto Moses: 'I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken, for thou hast found grace in My sight, and I know thee by name.'
- 18 And he said: 'Show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory.'
- 19 And He said: 'I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.'
- 20 And He said: 'Thou canst not see My face, for man shall not see Me and live.'
- 21 And the LORD said: 'Behold, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon the rock.'
- 22 And it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand until I have passed by.
- 23 And I will take away My hand, and thou shalt see My back; but My face shall not be seen.'
- 1 And the LORD said unto Moses: 'Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first; and I will write upon the tables the words that were on the first tables, which thou didst break.'
- 2 And be ready by the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to Me on the top of the mount.
- 3 And no man shall come up with thee, neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount; neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mount.'
- 4 And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand two tables of stone.
- 5 And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with



- וַיִּקְרָא בְשֵׁם יְהוָה. him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.
- ו וַיַּעֲבֹר יְהוָה עַל-פָּנָיו וַיִּקְרָא יְהוָה 6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed:  
יְהוָה אֵל רַחוּם וְחַנוּן אֲרֻךְ אַפִּים  
וְרַב-חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת. 'The LORD, the LORD, God, merciful and gracious, long-  
suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth;
- ז נָצַר חֶסֶד לְאַלְפִים נֶשֶׂא עוֹן וּפָשַׁע 7 keeping mercy unto the thousandth generation, forgiving  
וְחַטָּאָה וְנִקְיָה, לֹא יְנַקֶּה פֶקֶד עוֹן  
אֲבוֹת עַל-בָּנִים וְעַל-בְּנֵי בָנִים עַל-  
שְׁלֹשִׁים וְעַל-רִבְעִים. iniquity and transgression and sin; and that will by no  
means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers  
upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto  
the third and unto the fourth generation.'
- ח וַיַּמְהֵר מֹשֶׁה וַיִּקְדַּ אֶרְצָה וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה. 8 And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the  
earth, and worshipped.
- כח וַיְהִי-שָׁם עִם-יְהוָה אַרְבָּעִים 28 And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty  
יָמִים וְאֶרְבָּעִים לַיְלָה לֶחֶם לֹא אָכַל  
וּמַיִם לֹא שָׁתָה וַיִּכְתֹּב עַל-הַלְחָת  
אֵת דִּבְרֵי הַבְּרִית עֲשֶׂרֶת הַדְּבָרִים. nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he  
wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten  
words.
- כט וַיְהִי בִרְדַּת מֹשֶׁה מִהָר סִינַי 29 And it came to pass, when Moses came down from  
וַיֵּשְׁבֵי לַחַת הָעֵדֻת בִּיד-מֹשֶׁה בִּרְדָּתוֹ  
מִן-הָהָר וּמֹשֶׁה לֹא-יָדַע כִּי קָרוֹ עוֹר  
פָּנָיו בִּדְבָרוֹ אֹתוֹ. mount Sinai with the two tables of the testimony in Moses'  
hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses  
knew not that the skin of his face sent forth beams while He  
talked with him.
- ל וַיֵּרָא אַהֲרֹן וְכָל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת- 30 And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw  
מֹשֶׁה וְהִנֵּה קָרוֹ עוֹר פָּנָיו וַיִּירָאוּ  
מִגִּשְׁתֹּת אֵלָיו. Moses, behold, the skin of his face sent forth beams; and  
they were afraid to come nigh him.
- לא וַיִּקְרָא אֲלֵהֶם מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּשְׁבוּ 31 And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the  
אֵלָיו אַהֲרֹן וְכָל-הַנְּשָׂאִים בְּעֵדָה  
וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה, אֲלֵהֶם. rulers of the congregation returned unto him; and Moses  
spoke to them.
- לב וְאַחֲרֵי-כֵן נִגְשׂוּ כָל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל 32 And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh, and  
וַיִּצְוֶם אֶת כָּל-אִשָּׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֹתוֹ  
בְּהָר סִינַי. he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had  
spoken with him in mount Sinai.
- לג וַיָּכַל מֹשֶׁה מִדַּבֵּר אֲתָם וַיִּתֵּן 33 And when Moses had done speaking with them, he put a  
עַל-פָּנָיו מִסְוָה. veil on his face.
- לד וּבָבֹא מֹשֶׁה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לְדַבֵּר 34 But when Moses went in before the LORD that He might  
אֹתוֹ יָסִיר אֶת-הַמִּסְוָה עַד-צֵאתוֹ  
וַיָּצֵא וַיְדַבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת  
אֲשֶׁר יִצְוָה. speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out; and  
he came out; and spoke unto the children of Israel that  
which he was commanded.
- לה וַיֵּרְאוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-פָּנֵי מֹשֶׁה 35 And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the

כִּי קָרַן עוֹר פְּנֵי מֹשֶׁה וַיָּשִׁיב מֹשֶׁה  
אֶת-הַמָּסָנָה עַל-פָּנָיו עַד-בֹּאוֹ לְדַבֵּר  
אִתּוֹ. skin of Moses' face sent forth beams; and Moses put the veil  
back upon his face, until he went in to speak with Him.

## ***Lesson Five***

### **Core Concept (for lessons 5 and 6)**

An intimate encounter with God has the potential to leave us utterly transformed.

### **Schedule at a Glance**

00:00-00:25 – introduction

00:25-1:05 – studying the Biblical text

1:05-1:15 – break

1:15-1:50 – learning with your spiritual chevruta

1:50-2:00 – personal reflection

### **Detailed Procedure**

00:00-00:25 – opening activity

- Adapted from Rachael Kessler<sup>27</sup>
  - Tell participants ahead of time to bring in an object that for them represents an encounter with the sacred (if anyone forgets their object, they can draw a picture of it instead)
  - Half of the group puts their objects in the middle of the room. The other half of the class each chooses an object, then partners with the owner to hear the story that the object represents.
  - After a few minutes, bring the class back together and have the other half of the group put their objects in the middle and repeat the process
  - Optional: When the group reconvenes, partners can share the story that they heard with the whole class

00:25-1:05 – studying the Biblical text -- Exodus 33:17-34:8, 34:28-35

- Framing: where are we in the narrative? Previously, Moses went up to Mt. Sinai to receive the 10 Commandments. While he was gone, Aaron helped the Israelites build the golden calf. When Moses came down the mountain and saw the calf, he dropped/threw down the tablets with the 10 commandments.
- Read Exodus 33:17-23
  - What is Moses asking? How does God respond? Why?
  - How can we understand the relationship between God and Moses from this passage?
- Read Exodus 34:1-8
  - What is happening in this passage?
  - Compare 34:5-7 to the previous passage (33:19-23) – how are those encounters different?

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<sup>27</sup> Kessler, Rachael. *The Soul of Education: Helping Students Find Connection, Compassion, and Character at School*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2000. Page 9

- What does this passage add to your understanding of the relationship between God and Moses?
- Read Exodus 34:28-35
  - Framing: In between this passage and the previous one, God promises to drive out the Canaanites from the Promised Land, gives many laws to Moses, telling him to “write down these commandments” (Exodus 34:27), and with them God will make a covenant with Moses and Israel.
  - What is happening here?
  - How do the Israelites react to Moses?
  - What does this passage add to your understanding of the relationship between God and Moses?
- What questions do we still have about this text?

1:05-1:15 – break

1:15-1:50 – working with your spiritual chevruta

- Sharing our own experiences of intimate, transformative encounter

1:50-2:00 – personal reflection

- Respond to anything that happened in the class or reflect on the following prompt:
  - For these last few classes, we have been engaged in sacred conversation and sharing personal stories. How has this experience been for you? If it is difficult, why do you think that is? If it has felt natural, why do you think that is? How is your relationship with individuals in the class changed after sharing a sacred story with them? How has it changed the way that you look at your own stories/experiences?

## ***Lesson Six***

### **Core Concept (for lessons 5 and 6)**

An intimate encounter with God has the potential to leave us utterly transformed.

### **Schedule at a Glance**

00:00-00:15 – opening reflection/sharing exercise

00:15-00:25 – remembering back to the Biblical text

00:25-00:50 – studying 2 midrashim as a class

00:50-1:00 – select a midrash

1:00-1:10 – break

1:10-1:30 – studying midrashim in chevruta

1:30-1:50 – reflection/sharing in chevruta

1:50-2:00 – personal reflection

### **Detailed Procedure**

00:00-00:15 – opening reflection/sharing exercise

- Transition into this space, check in, set the tone for the class

00:15-00:25 – remembering back to the Biblical text

- Reread
  - What questions do we have about what's happening here?
    - Look back at the questions we wrote down from last class; does rereading this excerpt raise anything new?

00:25-00:50 – studying 2 midrashim as a class

- Questions to consider:
  - What questions in/about the Biblical text is this midrash seeking to answer?
  - How does this text understand the relationship between God and Moses?
  - How does this midrash change/expand your understanding of the Biblical text?

00:50-1:00 – choosing your own midrash

- Learners can now “visit the midrash museum” and choose a midrash to study with their chevruta

1:00-1:10 – break

1:10-1:30 – studying midrashim in chevruta

- Questions to consider:
  - How does this midrash “hook” into the story? What questions is it trying to answer?
  - How does this midrash change or expand our understanding of what is happening in the Biblical text?
  - How does this midrash impact your understanding of the relationship between God and Moses?
  - In what way does this midrash speak to your own experience of intimate and transformative encounter?

1:30-1:50 – making midrash our own

- You can choose:
  - to take one of the midrashim that you studied today (either in chevruta or as a whole class) and expand it to reflect your own understanding of intimate and transformative encounter
  - OR to create a visual midrash that reflects your understanding of the relationship between Moses and God

1:50-2:00 – personal reflection

- Respond to anything that happened in class or the following prompt:
- Moses' intimate encounter with God changed his relationship with the Israelite community. How has taking this course and reflecting on your relationship with God impacted your relationships with friends and loved ones?

The Legends of the Jews

[http://philologos.org/\\_eb-lotj/vol3/p04.htm#THE SECOND TABLES](http://philologos.org/_eb-lotj/vol3/p04.htm#THE SECOND TABLES)

Forty days and forty nights Moses now devoted to the study of the Torah, and in all the time he ate no bread and drank no water, acting in accordance with the proverb, "If thou enterest a city, observe its laws." The angels followed this maxim when they visited Abraham, for they there ate like men; and so did Moses, who being among angels, like the angels partook of no food. He received nourishment from radiance of the Shekinah, which also sustains the holy Hayyot that bear the Throne. Moses spent the day in learning the Torah from God, and the night in repeating what he had learned. In this way he set an example for Israel, that they might occupy themselves with the Torah by night and by day.

### שמות רבה (וילנא) פרשה מה

ו ויאמר ה' הנה מקום אתי ונצבת על הצור, א"ר יוסי בר ר' חנינא הנה אנכי במקום הזה אין כתיב כאן אלא הנה מקום אתי אתרי טפלה לי ואין אני טפל לאתרי, והסירותי את כפי אמר לו הקב"ה אני מראה לך מתן שכרן של צדיקים שאני עתיד ליתן להם באחרית הימים, א"ר אסי הסעודה של ג"ע = גן עדן = ראו נביאים ומתן שכרן לא ראו שנאמר (ישעיה סד) עין לא ראתה אלהים זולתך יעשה למחכה לו, וכן דוד אמר (תהלים לא) מה רב טובך אשר צפנת ליראיך, מה כתיב למעלה, ויאמר אני אעביר כל טובי על פניך מדת הטוב ומדת הפורענות וחנותי את אשר אחון באותה שעה הראה לו הקב"ה את כל האוצרות של מתן שכר שהן מתוקננין לצדיקים והוא אומר האוצר הזה של מי הוא והוא אומר של עושי מצות, והאוצר הזה של מי הוא של מגדלי יתומים, וכל אוצר ואוצר, ואח"כ ראה אוצר גדול אמר האוצר הזה של מי הוא א"ל מי שיש לו אני נותן לו משכרו ומי שאין לו אני עושה לו חנם ונותן לו מזה שנאמר וחנותי את אשר אחון, וחנותי את אשר אחון למי שאני מבקש לחון, וכן ורחמתי את אשר ארחם.

Midrash Rabbah - Exodus 45:6

And God said, "*See, there is a place near Me. Station yourself on the rock* (Exodus 33:21)." Rabbi Jose bar Rabbi Hanina said: It is not written 'Behold I am in this place,' but rather, '*there is a place by Me,*' implying, The place where I am is secondary to Me, but I am not secondary to My place.'

"*Then I will take My hand away* (Exodus 33:23)." God said to him: 'I will reveal to you the reward of the righteous which I will bestow upon them in the end of days.'<sup>28</sup> Rabbi Assi said:

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<sup>28</sup> The word *ahoray* (אחרי) translated as MY BACK is connected with the words *aharith hayamim* (אחרית), the end of days.

The prophets beheld the banquet prepared [for the righteous] in Paradise, but did not behold the reward they would receive, for it says: *No eye has seen them, O God, but You, who act for those who wait for You* (Isaiah 64:3), and David also said: *Oh how abundant is the good that You have in store for those who fear You* (Psalm 31:20).

What is written above (from Exodus 33)? *And God Said, I will make all My Goodness pass before you...* (Exodus 33:19), that is, I will show you both My Attribute of Dispensing Goodness and My Attribute of Punishment. *And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious* (ibid). Then it was that God showed him all the treasures in which the rewards of the righteous are stored away. Moses asked: 'To whom does all this treasure belong?' and God replied: 'To those who fulfil My commandments.' 'And to whom does this treasure belong?' 'To those who bring up orphans.' So it was with every treasure. Later he saw a huge treasure and inquired, 'Whose is this great treasure?' The Divine rejoinder was: 'to the one that has (such things to his credit) I give of his (own) reward, but unto the one who has not, I supply freely and I help him from this great pile,' as it says, *And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious*, namely, unto the one to whom I wish to be gracious. Similarly, *And I will show mercy onto whom I will show mercy* (ibid).

### שמות רבה (וילנא) פרשה מז

ו ויכתוב על הלוחות, מלמד שהראשונים והאחרונים היו שווים, עשרת הדברות, כיצד היו עשויין ה' על לוח זה וה' על לוח זה כדברי ר' יהודה, ור' נחמיה אומר י' על לוח זה וי' על לוח זה שנא' (שמות לד) ויהי ברדת משה מהר סיני והכתובים הם טוענים אותן והיו נראין כאלו הם ביד משה שנאמר ושני לוחות העדות ביד משה, ומשה לא ידע כי קרן עור פניו, ומהיכן נטל משה קרני ההוד, רבנן אמרי מן המערה שנא' והיה בעבור כבודי, ר' ברכיה הכהן בשם רבי שמואל אמר הלוחות היו ארכן ו' טפחים ורחבן ו' והיה משה אוהז בטפחיים והשכינה בטפחיים וטפחיים באמצע ומשם נטל משה קרני ההוד, ר' יהודה בר נחמן בשם רשב"ל אומר עד שהיה כותב בקולמוס נשתייר קימנא והעבירו על ראשו וממנו נעשו לו קרני ההוד שנא' ומשה לא ידע כי קרן עור פניו.

Midrash Rabbah – Exodus 47:6

*And He wrote upon the tables the words of the covenants, the ten words* (Exodus 34:28). This (the inclusion of "the ten words") is to teach us that the second tables were exactly like the first. *The ten words*. How were they arranged? According to Rabbi Judah, five were inscribed on one table and five on the other; but Rabbi Nehemiah said: There were ten on each table, for it says, *And it came to pass, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of the*



*testimony in Moses' hand* (Exodus 34:29).<sup>29</sup> The Ten Commandments were in reality carrying them [the tables], though they appeared to be in the hand of Moses, as it says: *With the two tables of the testimony in Moses' hand*.<sup>30</sup>

*Moses Knew not that the skin of his face sent forth beams* (Exodus 34:29). From where did Moses derive these beams of glory? The Sages said: From the cleft of the rock, as it says: *And it shall come to pass, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with My hand until I have passed by* (Exodus 33:22).<sup>31</sup>

Rabbi Berekiah the priest, said in the name of Rabbi Samuel: The tables were six handbreadths in length and six in breadth; Moses grasped two handbreadths and the Shechinah another two, two handbreadths being left in the center, and it was from them that Moses derived those beams of splendour. Rabbi Judah bar Nahman said in the name of Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish: A little ink was left on the pen with which Moses wrote [the Decalogue] and when he passed this pen through the hair of his head the beams of splendour appeared; therefore it says: *Moses knew not that the skin of his face sent forth beams*.

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<sup>29</sup> These words imply that each table was a testimony in itself, because it had engraved on it all of the Ten Commandments.

<sup>30</sup> The word 'hand' in the singular points to the ease with which Moses carried those heavy stone tablets--a proof that they really carried themselves.

<sup>31</sup> The result of this covering with God's hand left the face of Moses resplendent.

## Searching for God

1 Samuel 28:3-25

- ג וּשְׁמוּאֵל מֵת וַיִּסְפְּדוּ-לוֹ כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל, וַיִּקְבְּרוּהוּ בְרָמָה וּבְעִירוֹ וּשְׂאוּל הִסִּיר הָאֲבוֹת וְאֶת-הַיִּדְּעָנִים מִהָאָרֶץ.
- 3 Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. And Saul had put away those that divined by a ghost or a familiar spirit out of the land.
- ד וַיִּקְבְּצוּ פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיָּבֹאוּ וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּשׁוֹנִם וַיִּקְבְּצוּ שְׂאוּל אֶת-כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּגִלְבֹּעַ.
- 4 And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem; and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa.
- ה וַיֵּרָא שְׂאוּל אֶת-מַחֲנֶה פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיֵּרָא וַיַּחְרַד לְבוֹ מְאֹד.
- 5 And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly.
- ו וַיִּשְׁאַל שְׂאוּל בַּיהוָה וְלֹא עָנָהוּ יְהוָה גַּם בְּחִלְמוֹת גַּם בְּאוּרִים גַּם בְּנְבִיאִים.
- 6 And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.
- ז וַיֹּאמֶר שְׂאוּל לַעֲבָדָיו בִּקְשׁוּ-לִי אִשָּׁת בְּעַלְת-אוֹב וְאִלְכָה אֵלֶיהָ וְאֶדְרָשָׁה-בָּהּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ עֲבָדָיו אֵלָיו הִנֵּה אִשָּׁת בְּעַלְת-אוֹב בְּעֵין דּוֹר.
- 7 Then said Saul unto his servants: 'Seek me a woman that divineth by a ghost, that I may go to her, and inquire of her.' And his servants said to him: 'Behold, there is a woman that divineth by a ghost at En-dor.'
- ח וַיִּתְחַפֵּשׂ שְׂאוּל וַיַּלְבֵּשׂ בְּגָדִים אֲחֵרִים וַיֵּלֶךְ הוּא וּשְׁנֵי אַנְשֵׁים עִמּוֹ וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל-הָאִשָּׁה לַיְלָה וַיֹּאמֶר קְסוּמִי- (קֶסֶם) נָא לִי בְּאוֹב וְהַעֲלֵי לִי אֶת אִשָּׁר-אֹמֵר אֵלַיךְ.
- 8 And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and went, he and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night; and he said: 'Divine unto me, I pray thee, by a ghost, and bring me up whomsoever I shall name unto thee.'
- ט וַתֹּאמֶר הָאִשָּׁה אֵלָיו הִנֵּה אֵתָּה יֹדַעְתָּ אֶת אִשָּׁר-עָשָׂה שְׂאוּל אִשָּׁר הַכְרִית אֶת-הָאֲבוֹת וְאֶת-הַיִּדְּעָנִי מִן-הָאָרֶץ וְלָמָּה אֵתָּה מַתְנַקֵּשׁ בְּנַפְשִׁי לְהַמִּיתֵנִי.
- 9 And the woman said unto him: 'Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that divine by a ghost or a familiar spirit out of the land; wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?'
- י וַיִּשָּׁבַע לָהּ שְׂאוּל בַּיהוָה לֵאמֹר: חַי-יְהוָה אִם-יִקְרָךְ עוֹן בְּדָבָר הַזֶּה.
- 10 And Saul swore to her by the LORD, saying: 'As the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing.'
- יא וַתֹּאמֶר הָאִשָּׁה, אֶת-מִי אֶעֱלֶה-לָּךְ וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת-שְׁמוּאֵל הַעֲלֵי-לִי.
- 11 Then said the woman: 'Whom shall I bring up unto thee?' And he said: 'Bring me up Samuel.'
- יב וַתֵּרָא הָאִשָּׁה אֶת-שְׁמוּאֵל וַתִּזְעַק בְּקוֹל גָּדוֹל וַתֹּאמֶר הָאִשָּׁה אֶל-שְׂאוּל לֵאמֹר לָמָּה רַמִּיתָנִי וְאֵתָּה שְׂאוּל.
- 12 And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice; and the woman spoke to Saul, saying: 'Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul.'

**יג** וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-תִּירָאִי כִּי מָה רְאִיתִי וַתֹּאמֶר הָאִשָּׁה אֶל-שָׂאוּל אֱלֹהִים רָאִיתִי עֹלִים מִן-הָאָרֶץ.

**יד** וַיֹּאמֶר לַהֵמָּה-תֵּאָרוּ וַתֹּאמֶר אִישׁ זָקֵן עָלָה וְהוּא עֹטָה מְעִיל וַיַּדַּע שָׂאוּל כִּי-שְׂמוּאֵל הוּא וַיִּקַּד אַפָּיִם אַרְצָה וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה.

**טו** וַיֹּאמֶר שְׂמוּאֵל אֶל-שָׂאוּל לָמָּה הִרְגַּזְתָּנִי לְהַעֲלוֹת אֹתִי וַיֹּאמֶר שָׂאוּל צָר-לִי מְאֹד וּפְלִשְׁתִּים נִלְחָמִים בִּי וְאֱלֹהִים סָר מֵעָלַי וְלֹא-עֲנִי עוֹד גַּם בֶּן-דָּבִד-הַנְּבִיאִים גַּם-בְּחִלְמוֹת וְאֶקְרָאָה לָדָּד, לְהוֹדִיעָנִי מָה אַעֲשֶׂה.

**טז** וַיֹּאמֶר שְׂמוּאֵל וְלָמָּה תִּשְׁאַלֵנִי וַיְהִי סָר מֵעָלָיָהּ וַיְהִי עָרָד.

**יז** וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה לוֹ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר בְּיָדִי וַיִּקְרַע יְהוָה אֶת-הַמַּמְלָכָה מִיָּדָהּ וַיִּתְּנָהּ לְרַעְדָּהּ לְדָוִד.

**יח** כַּאֲשֶׁר לֹא-שָׁמַעַתָּ בְּקוֹל יְהוָה וְלֹא-עָשִׂיתָ חֲרוֹן-אָפוֹ בַּעֲמָלֶק עַל-כֵּן הִדְּבַר הַזֶּה עָשָׂה-לָּךְ יְהוָה הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה.

**יט** וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה גַּם אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמָּךְ בֶּן-דָּבִד-פְּלִשְׁתִּים וּמַחֲרֵאֲתָהּ וּבְנֵיהָ עִמָּי גַּם אֶת-מַחֲנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל יִתֵּן יְהוָה בְּיַד-פְּלִשְׁתִּים.

**כ** וַיִּמָּחֶר שָׂאוּל וַיִּפֹּל מִלֵּא-קוֹמָתוֹ אַרְצָה וַיָּרָא מְאֹד מְדַבְּרֵי שְׂמוּאֵל גַּם-כַּח לֹא-הָיָה בּוֹ כִּי לֹא אָכַל לֶחֶם כָּל-הַיּוֹם וְכָל-הַלַּיְלָה.

**כא** וַתָּבוֹא הָאִשָּׁה אֶל-שָׂאוּל וַתֵּרָא כִּי-נִבְהַל מְאֹד וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הִנֵּה שְׂמִיעָה שִׁפְחָתְךָ בְּקוֹלְךָ וְאֲשִׁים נִפְשֵׁי בְכָפִי וְאֲשָׁמַע אֶת-דְּבָרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ אֵלַי.

**כב** וַעֲתָה שָׁמַע-נָא גַם-אֶתָּה בְּקוֹל שִׁפְחָתְךָ וְאֲשָׁמָה לְפָנֶיךָ פֶּת-לֶחֶם וְאֶכּוֹל

**13** And the king said unto her: 'Be not afraid; for what seest thou?' And the woman said unto Saul: 'I see a godlike being coming up out of the earth.'

**14** And he said unto her: 'What form is he of?' And she said: 'An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a robe.' And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground, and prostrated himself.

**15** And Samuel said to Saul: 'Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?' And Saul answered: 'I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams; therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.'

**16** And Samuel said: 'Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine adversary?

**17** And the LORD hath wrought for Himself; as He spoke by me; and the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thy hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David.

**18** Because thou didst not hearken to the voice of the LORD, and didst not execute His fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day.

**19** Moreover the LORD will deliver Israel also with thee into the hand of the Philistines; and to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me; the LORD will deliver the host of Israel also into the hand of the Philistines.'

**20** Then Saul fell straightway his full length upon the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel; and there was no strength in him; for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night.

**21** And the woman came unto Saul, and saw that he was sore affrighted, and said unto him: 'Behold, thy handmaid hath hearkened unto thy voice, and I have put my life in my hand, and have hearkened unto thy words which thou spakest unto me.

**22** Now therefore, I pray thee, hearken thou also unto the voice of thy handmaid, and let me set a morsel of bread

ויהי בָּדָד כֹּחַ כִּי תֵלֶךְ בַּדֶּרֶךְ. before thee; and eat, that thou mayest have strength, when thou goest on thy way.'

**כג** וַיִּמָּאֵן וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֲכַל וַיִּפְרְצוּ-בוּ עֲבָדָיו וְגַם-הָאִשָּׁה וַיִּשְׁמַע לְקֹלָם וַיָּקָם מִהָאָרֶץ וַיֵּשֶׁב אֶל-הַמֶּטָּה. **23** But he refused, and said: 'I will not eat.' But his servants, together with the woman, urged him; and he hearkened unto their voice. So he arose from the earth, and sat upon the bed.

**כד** וְלֵאשָׁה עֵגֶל-מֵרֵבֶק בַּבַּיִת וַתַּמְהֵר וַתִּזְבַּחַהּ וַתִּקַּח-קֶמַח וַתֵּלֶשׁ וַתַּפֶּהּ מִצּוֹת. **24** And the woman had a fattened calf in the house; and she made haste, and killed it; and she took flour, and kneaded it, and did bake unleavened bread thereof;

**כה** וַתִּגֵּשׁ לִפְנֵי-שָׁאוּל וּלְפָנֵי עֲבָדָיו וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּקְמוּ וַיֵּלְכוּ בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא. **25** and she brought it before Saul, and before his servants; and they did eat. Then they rose up, and went away that night.

## ***Lesson Seven***

### **Core Concept (for lessons 7 and 8)**

There are moments in our lives when God is hidden from us.

### **Schedule at a Glance**

00:00-00:25 – introduction

00:25-1:05 – studying the Biblical text

1:05-1:15 – break

1:15-1:50 – learning with your spiritual chevruta

1:50-2:00 – personal reflection

### **Detailed Procedure**

00:00-00:25 – opening activity

- Exercise adapted from Carol Ochs<sup>32</sup>
  - Pair up (with someone other than your chevruta), tell a story while your partner listens as if it were sacred text – share back the text, switch roles, then reflect on the experience
    - How did it feel for someone to “read” God into an experience where you did not feel that God was present?

00:25-1:05 – studying the Biblical text -- I Samuel 28:3-25

- Framing: King Saul was the first king to rule over the people. He was anointed/declared king by the prophet Samuel. After disobeying an order from God (delivered to Saul via Samuel) to kill all the people and destroy all the booty when fighting Amalek, the spirit of God leaves Saul. He begins trying to kill David, who is best friends with Saul’s son Jonathan, and a growing hero in the Israelite kingdom. At the point in which we are reading today, the prophet Samuel has just passed away, and Saul is on the eve of a great battle, which he is not confident that he will win.
- Read: I Samuel 28:3-6
  - What is happening here?
  - How would you describe the relationship between God and Saul?
- Read I Samuel 28:7-14
  - What is Saul trying to do here? Why?
  - How does this passage add to our understanding of the relationship with God and Saul?
- Read I Samuel 28:15-25
  - What does Samuel tell Saul?
  - What does this passage add to our understanding of the relationship with God and Saul?
- What questions do we have about this text?

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<sup>32</sup> Ochs, Carol. *Our Lives as Torah: Finding God in our own Stories*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001. Page 3

1:05-1:15 – break

1:15-1:50 – working with your spiritual chevruta

- Sharing our own experiences of searching for God/answers

1:50-2:00 – personal reflection

- Respond to anything that happened in the class or reflect on the following prompt:
  - In this Biblical passage, Saul feels that God has withdrawn from him in his time of need. How has this course impacted your sense of God's presence in your life? Do you sense that God is more present? Are you more aware of God's absence? How has reflecting on your past experiences changed the way that you see them?

## ***Lesson Eight***

### **Core Concept (for lessons 7 and 8)**

There are moments in our lives when God is hidden from us.

### **Schedule at a Glance**

00:00-00:15 – opening reflection/sharing exercise

00:15-00:25 – remembering back to the Biblical text

00:25-00:50 – studying 2 midrashim as a class

00:50-1:00 – select a midrash

1:00-1:10 – break

1:10-1:30 – studying midrashim in chevruta

1:30-1:50 – reflection/sharing in chevruta

1:50-2:00 – personal reflection

### **Detailed Procedure**

00:00-00:15 – opening reflection/sharing exercise

- Transition into this space, check in, set the tone for the class

00:15-00:25 – remembering back to the Biblical text

- Reread I Samuel 28:3-25
  - What questions do we have about what's happening here?
    - Look back at the questions we wrote down from last class; does rereading this excerpt raise anything new?

00:25-00:50 – studying 2 midrashim as a class

- Questions to consider:
  - What questions in/about the Biblical text is this midrash seeking to answer?
  - How does this text understand the relationship between God and Saul?
  - How does this midrash change/expand your understanding of the Biblical text?

00:50-1:00 – choosing your own midrash

- Learners can now “visit the midrash museum” and choose a midrash to study with their chevruta

1:00-1:10 – break

1:10-1:30 – studying midrashim in chevruta

- Questions to consider:
  - How does this midrash “hook” into the story? What questions is it trying to answer?
  - How does this midrash change or expand our understanding of what is happening in the Biblical text?
  - How does this midrash impact your understanding of the relationship between God and Saul?
  - In what way does this midrash speak to your own experience of searching for God/answers

1:30-1:50 – making midrash our own

- You can choose:
  - to take one of the midrashim that you studied today (either in chevruta or as a whole class) and expand it to reflect your own understanding of seeking out God
  - OR write an original poem

1:50-2:00 – personal reflection

- Respond to anything that happened in class or the following prompt:
  - When Saul does not get a response from God, he seeks out alternative means of divining the future. In moments that you have sensed God's withdrawal from your life, where have you turned? In times that your normal rituals and practices have failed you (or that the rituals of normative Judaism have not moved you), how have you responded?



**Modern Hebrew Poetry:**

Shaul Tchernichowsky – “Hamelech”

Yocheved Bat-Miriam – “Sha’ul”

**מדרש שמואל (בובר) פרשה כד**

[א] ואיש או אשה כי יהיה בהם אוב או ידעוני מות יומתו באבן ירגמו אותם דמיהם בהם (ויקרא כ' כ"ז), רבי לוי בשם רבי חמא בר ר' חנינא [אמר] איש זה שאול, אשה זו בעלת אוב, רבי יהושע דסיכנין בשם רבי לוי מוטב היה לו לדרוש באורים ותומים של מעלה ולא באוב וידעוני של מטה, ויאמר שאול לעבדיו בקשו לי אשת בעלת אוב וגו' (ש"א = שמואל א' = כ"ח ז'), ולמה היה שאול דומה באותה שעה, לשלטון שנכנס למדינה גזר ואמר כל התרנגולים הזכרים שיש כאן ישחטו, לשחרית אמר אין תרנגול שיקרא, אמרו לו עבדיו ולא אתה הוא שגזרת שישחטו כולם, כך ושאל הסיר את האובות ואת הידעונים (מן הארץ) [מהארץ] (שם שם / שמואל א' כ"ח / ג') (והוא אומר בקשו לי אשת בעלת אוב וגו', ויתחפש שאול) (שם שם / שמואל א' כ"ח / ח')

*“A man or a woman that divines by a ghost or a familiar spirit, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones; their blood shall be upon them (Leviticus 20:27).”* Rabbi Levi said in the name of Rabbi Hama bar Rabbi Haninah: this man [referred to in Leviticus] is Saul, and this woman is the Diviner of Ghosts [that Saul visits in Endor]. Rabbi Joshua said in the name of Rabbi Levi: It would have been better for him to seek [answers] with the Urim and Tummim of above and not with the ghosts and spirits of below.

*“Saul to his servants: ‘Seek me a woman that divines by a ghost...(I Samuel 28:7)’* To what could Saul be likened at that moment? To a king who entered a province and issued a decree that all the roosters in it should be slaughtered. In the morning he said, “No rooster crowed!” His servants said to him, “Are you not the one who decreed that they should all be slaughtered?” So too: *Saul removed from the land all who divined by ghost or familiar spirits (I Samuel 28:3).* Then he turned around and said, *“Seek me a woman that divines by a ghost.”*

[ב] וילך הוא ושני אנשיו עמו (שם שם / שמואל א' כ"ח /), זה אבנר ועמשא, אמר רבי אבהו למדתך תורה דרך ארץ שלא יהא אדם יוצא לדרך פחות משנים, ואם יוצא הוא לדרך פחות משנים סוף שהוא נעשה עבד לעבדיו, אמר רבי אבהו שני בני אדם נהגו בדרך ארץ אברהם ושאול, אברהם ויקח את שני נעריו וגו' (בראשית כ"ב ג'), שאול וילך הוא ושני אנשים עמו (שמואל א' כ"ח /), ויבאו אל האשה לילה (שם שם / שמואל א' כ"ח /) וכי לילה היה, אלא מלמד [אותה] שעה היתה אפילה להם כלילה.

*“and he went and two men with him” (I Samuel 28:8),* These (two men) were Abner and Amasa. Rabbi Abahu said: Torah has taught us how to behave in the world – a man should not set out with less than two (other people with him), and if he sets out with less than two, in the end he

will become a servant to his servants. Rabbi Abahu said: two men behaved in this way – Abraham and Saul. Abraham “took two of his youths...(Genesis 22:3), and Saul “went and two men with him.”

“They came upon the woman by night (I Samuel 28:8).” Was it night? No, but “at night” teaches us that for them the hour was as gloomy as night.

[ג] ויאמר אליה (קסמי נא באוב וגו', ותאמר האשה אליו הנה וגו', וישבע לה שאול בה' וגו') ש"א = שמואל א' = כ"ח ח' ט' י' (אמר רבי שמעון בן לקיש למה הדבר דומה באותה שעה, לאשה שהיתה נתונה אצל אהובה, ונשבעה בחיי בעלה, כך שאול שואל באוב וידעוני, והוא אומר חי ה' אם יקרה עון בדבר הזה) שם שם / שמואל א' כ"ח / י'

“He said, Divine unto me by a ghost...And she said behold (you know what Saul has done)...And Saul swore to her by the Lord” (1 Samuel 28:8-10). Rabbi Simon bat Lakiah said: To whom may Saul be compared in this moment? To a woman in the company of her lover swears by the life of her husband. So too Saul while inquiring of ghosts and familiar spirits said: *as the Lord lives there shall be no punishment happening to you for this thing* (I Samuel 28:10).

...ותרא האשה את שמואל ותזעק [בקול גדול] (שם שם / שמואל א' כ"ח / י"ב), מאיכן היתה יודעת שהוא שאול, אלא לא כשם שהוא עולה להדיט עולה למלך, למלך הוא עולה פניו למעלה, ולהדיט הוא עולה פניו למטה, ויאמר לה המלך אל תיראי וגו'

*When the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice... (I Samuel 28:12).* How did she know that he was Saul? Because of the way (a ghost) rises for an ordinary person is not the same way that it rises for a king. For a king he rises upright, for an ordinary person it rises upside down. *The king said to her, don't be afraid... (I Samuel 28:13).*

[ו] ויאמר שאול צר לי מאד ופלשתים וגו' (ש"א = שמואל א' = כ"ח ט"ו), מפני מה לא שאל באורים ותומים, אמר רבי יצחק בר חייא לב יודע מרת נפשו (משלי י"ד י'), אילו שאל באורים ותומים, לא היו אומרים לו לא אתה שאול הוא שהחרבת את נוב עיר הכהנים, ויאמר שמואל ולמה תשאלני וגו' [ויהי עריך] (שמואל א' / שם / כ"ח)

*And Saul answered: 'I am sore distressed; for the Philistines (make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams)... (I Samuel 28:15).* But why did Saul not also say, “nor by Urim and Tummim?” Had Saul mentioned the Urim and Tummim, Samuel might have said to him, are you not the one who brought it upon yourself and are you not the one who smote Nob, the city of Priests (including Achimeleh the high priest)? *And Samuel said, “What do you ask of me?... (I Samuel 28:16).*

Then Saul fell straight away his full length upon the earth and was sore afraid because of the words of Samuel (28:20).

## The Book of Legends

77. "Then said the woman, whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me Samuel." (28:11). The woman did what she had to do and said what she had to and brought up Samuel. "And Samuel said to Saul: why hast thou disquieted me? And Saul answered: I am sore depressed...and God is departed from me and answers me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams" (28:15).

But why did Saul not also say, "nor by Urim and Tummim?" "the heart knoweth its own bitterness (Proverbs 14:10)" Had Saul mentioned the Urim and Tummim, Samuel might have said to him, are you not the one who brought it upon yourself and are you not the one who smote Nob, the city of Priests (including Achimeleh the high priest)? Then Saul fell straight away his full length upon the earth and was sore afraid because of the words of Samuel (28:20).

When Abner and Amasa asked, what did Samuel say to you, he replied, (untruthfully), "he said, tomorrow when you go down to battle you will be victorious, More, your sons will be appointed to high office!" Then Saul took his three sons and they went forth to war. At that very moment, said Resh Lakish, the holy one summoned the ministering angels and said to them, "come and behold the extraordinary being that I created in my world! Ordinarily, even a man going to a feast will not take his sons with him because of the evil eye, but this man is going forth to war and though he knows that he will be slain, takes his sons with him, facing cheerfully the measure of justice that is sure to strike him."

## Finding God in the Still Small Voice

1 Kings 19:9-14

- ט** וַיָּבֹא-שָׁם אֶל-הַמְּעָרָה וַיֵּלֶן שָׁם  
וְהָיָה דְּבַר-יְהוָה אֵלָיו, וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ  
מַה-לָּךְ פֹּה אַלְיָהוּ.
- 9** And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and,  
behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said unto  
him: 'What doest thou here, Elijah?'
- י** וַיֹּאמֶר קָנָא קִנְאָתִי לַיהוָה  
אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת כִּי-עָזְבוּ בְרִיתְךָ בְּנֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-מִזְבְּחֶיךָ הָרְסוּ  
וְאֶת-נְבִיאֶיךָ הָרְגוּ בַּחֶרֶב וְאֹתִיר  
אֲנִי לְבַדִּי וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ אֶת-נַפְשִׁי  
לְקַחְתָּהּ.
- 10** And he said: 'I have been very jealous for the LORD, the  
God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy  
covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets  
with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my  
life, to take it away.'
- יא** וַיֹּאמֶר צֵא וְעֲמַדְתָּ בְּהָר לִפְנֵי  
יְהוָה וְהָיָה יְהוָה עֹבֵר וְרוּחַ גְּדוֹלָה  
וְחֶזֶק מִפָּרֶק הָרִים וּמִשָּׁבַר  
סָלְעִים לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לֹא בְרוּחַ יְהוָה  
וְאַחֲרֵי הָרוּחַ רָעַשׁ לֹא בָרֶעַשׁ  
יְהוָה.
- 11** And He said: 'Go forth, and stand upon the mount  
before the LORD.' And, behold, the LORD passed by,  
and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and  
broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the  
LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an  
earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake;
- יב** וְאַחֲרֵי הָרֶעַשׁ אֵשׁ לֹא בָאָשׁ  
יְהוָה וְאַחֲרֵי הָאֵשׁ קוֹל דְּמָמָה  
דָּקָה.
- 12** and after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not  
in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.
- יג** וַיְהִי כַּשֶּׁמַּע אֶלְיָהוּ וַיֵּלֶט פָּנָיו  
בְּאַדְרֵתוֹ וַיֵּצֵא, וַיַּעֲמֵד פֶּתַח  
הַמְּעָרָה וְהָיָה אֵלָיו קוֹל וַיֹּאמֶר  
מַה-לָּךְ פֹּה אַלְיָהוּ.
- 13** And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped  
his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the  
entrance of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice  
unto him, and said: 'What doest thou here, Elijah?'
- יד** וַיֹּאמֶר קָנָא קִנְאָתִי לַיהוָה  
אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת כִּי-עָזְבוּ בְרִיתְךָ בְּנֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-מִזְבְּחֶיךָ הָרְסוּ  
וְאֶת-נְבִיאֶיךָ הָרְגוּ בַּחֶרֶב וְאֹתִיר  
אֲנִי לְבַדִּי וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ אֶת-נַפְשִׁי  
לְקַחְתָּהּ.
- 14** And he said: 'I have been very jealous for the LORD, the  
God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy  
covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets  
with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my  
life, to take it away.'

## ***Lesson Nine***

### **Core Concept (for lesson 9)**

God can be found in the quiet moments of our lives.

### **Schedule**

00:00-00:25 – introduction

### **Detailed Procedure**

00:00-00:15 – opening activity adopted from Wakefield<sup>33</sup>

- Bring into class small items found in nature (stones, leaves, twigs, etc)
- Ask each learner to take an item, and to spend 10 minutes writing about it, focusing on all of the details
- Come back together and reflect: What was it like to focus so deeply on such an ‘ordinary’ object? Did you notice more about it the longer that you looked at it? How is this activity reflective of your relationship with God?

00:15-00:45 – studying the Biblical text – 1 Kings 19:9-14

- Framing: Who is Elijah? What is happening among the Israelites?
- Read 1 Kings 19:9-14
  - What is happening here?
  - How would you describe the relationship between God and Elijah?
  - What questions do we have about this text?

00:45-1:05 – working with your spiritual chevruta

- Listening dyad
  - Sharing our own experiences of sensing God in the “still small voice”

1:05-1:15 – break

1:15-1:35 – studying the midrash

- Pair up with another chevruta, and in your small group look at 2 midrashim on this text

1:35-1:50 – create your own midrash

1:50-2:00 – personal reflection

- Respond to anything that happened in the class or reflect on the following prompt:
  - Imagine that you were going to live your life with the intention of being open to and aware of “the Still Small Voice.” What would that mean for you? How do you think your life would change?

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<sup>33</sup> Wakefield, Dan. *Creating from the Spirit: Living Each day as a Creative Act*. New York: Ballantine Books. 1996.

### Legends of the Jews

The four phenomena that God sent before His appearance — wind, (29) earthquake, fire, and a still small voice — were to instruct Elijah about the destiny of man. God told Elijah that these four represent the worlds through which man must pass: the first stands for this world, fleeting as the wind; the earthquake is the day of death, which makes the human body to tremble and quake; fire is the tribunal in Gehenna, and the still small voice is the Last Judgment, when there will be none but God alone. (30)

רש"י מלכים א פרק יט פסוק יב

קול דממה דקה - קל דמשבחין בחשאי אבל בנביאי א"ה אומר דממה וקול אשמע (איוב ד' י"ו) דממה  
היתה לשבח, ואני שמעתי קול הבא מתוך הדממה דטינטישמנ"ט בלעז ואין שומעין הקול ממש:

Rashi

**v. 9: to the cave:** That is the cleft of the rock where Moses stood (Ex. 33:22).

**a still small sound:** A voice of those praising quietly, but concerning the prophets of the nations, Scripture states: (Job 4:16) "Silence and a voice I hear"; there was silence to the praising, but I heard the voice coming out of the silence, retentissement in O.F., resounding, but no one heard the voice itself.

## Conclusion

## *Lesson Ten*

### Schedule at a Glance

00:00-00:15 – opening activity

00:15-00:50 – looking back on what we have learned

00:50-1:00 – break

1:00-1:35 – spiritual chevruta

1:35-1:45 – personal reflection

1:45-2:00 – conclusion

### Supplies

Hershey Kisses

Small Post-it notes/paper and tape

Poster Paper

Pens

### Detailed Procedure

00:00-00:15 – opening activity

00:15-00:50 – looking back on what we have learned

- 15 minutes – reviewing the text: Over the last 9 sessions, we have studied 5 stories together, each describing a very different kind of relationship with God. Today, we'll be looking back at these tales and sharing some of the midrashim that we created based on these sacred texts. Let us begin by reminding ourselves of all that we have learned
  - 10 min - On these pieces of paper around the room are the key verses from the texts that we have studied. For the next few minutes, walk around the room and write whatever comes to mind on the space surrounding the text – maybe a key theme or idea from the story, maybe a question that remains with you, maybe a personal experience that you associate with this story. You are also welcome to respond to other people's written comments or questions
  - 5 min – bring all of the sheets of paper to the table and quickly look at each one – Are there uniting themes for each?
- 20 minutes – sharing our midrashim
  - For each Biblical text that we have learned, we have had the chance to also study many midrashim that expand on the biblical text. Everyone has also had the chance to create their own midrash, based on the text and your own experiences. Today, I'd like to invite everyone who feels comfortable to share one of their midrashim with the group.

00:50-1:00 – break

1:00-1:35 – spiritual chevruta

- Reflect on the experience of sharing your midrash/hearing other people's midrashim
- What paradigm of relationship with God remains the most resonant with you? Which is most distant? Why?

1:35-1:45 – personal reflection

- Reflection on the course
  - What has been the best part of the course? The most difficult? The most Surprising?

1:45-2:00 – conclusion

- Kessler's Hershey Kisses activity (adapted from Rachel Kessler)<sup>34</sup>
  - (ahead of time) write different descriptors about being in relationship with God (i.e. immanent, transcendent, steady, transformative, etc) on Post-it notes and attach them to the bottom of Hershey kisses. Arrange the Hershey kisses on a plate or platter, so that the descriptors are not visible (there should be 1 per learner)
  - Ask each learner to reflect for a moment on how they currently view their relationship with God, and how they would like their relationship with God to be in the future.
  - Then each learner can take a kiss, look at the description on the bottom – is it what you wanted? What is the relationship between what you wanted (for your relationship with God) and what you got?

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<sup>34</sup> Kessler, Rachael. *The Soul of Education: Helping Students Find Connection, Compassion, and Character at School*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2000. Page 89.



## Annotated Bibliography

Cohen, Steven M. and Hoffman, Laurence, How Spiritual Are America's Jews? S3KReport – March 2009, Synagogue 3000. <http://www.synagogue3000.org/files/S3KReportHowSpiritual.pdf>

In their report, Cohen and Hoffman study the spiritual state of American Jewry, providing insight into the spiritual side of American Jews as well as exploring the challenge of using language that feels “Jewish” to study participants.

Grant, Lisa and Schuster, Diane Tickton. “Adult Jewish Learning” in *What We Now Know About Jewish Education*, Ed. Roberta Louis Goodman, Paul A. Flexner and Linda Dale Bloomberg. Los Angeles: Torah Aura Productions, 2008. 161-172.

This article outlines some of the latest research on adult Jewish learning and how educators need to approach teaching adults in order to be successful.

Kessler, Rachael. *The Soul of Education: Helping Students Find Connection, Compassion, and Character at School*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2000.

Though Kessler's book is directed specifically toward teaching adolescents in the public school system, her insights and stories are invaluable to anyone looking to reach the whole person when they teach.

Ochs, Carol. *Our Lives as Torah: Finding God in our own Stories*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001.

Ochs writes powerfully about finding the Divine within our own stories, and how we can look at our own lives as sacred text.

Rabinowitch Thal, Linda. “Jewish Spirituality and Adult Spiritual Development” in *What We Now Know About Jewish Education*, Ed. Roberta Louis Goodman, Paul A. Flexner and Linda Dale Bloomberg. Los Angeles: Torah Aura Productions, 2008. 173-185.

This article describes the resurgence of interest in spirituality in America, offering some background in theories of faith development and different ways of understanding and approaching spirituality within a Jewish context.

Schein, Jeffery. “Teaching Jewish Texts” in *What We Now Know About Jewish Education*, Ed. Roberta Louis Goodman, Paul A. Flexner and Linda Dale Bloomberg. Los Angeles: Torah Aura Productions, 2008. 283-289.

Taylor, Kathleen. "Teaching with Developmental Intention," in *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*. Ed. Jack Mezirow. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000. 151-180.

Taylor provides a theoretical framework for thinking about the educational development of adult learners, supporting that framework with anecdotal experiences that illuminate her teachings.

Schein outlines some of the challenges that an educator can face in teaching Jewish texts, offering a rubric for thinking through the teaching of text and offering a few possibilities, including *lectio devina*, sacred reading at a contemplative pace, which played a role in this curriculum.

Wakefield, Dan. *Creating from the Spirit: Living Each day as a Creative Act*. New York: Ballantine Books. 1996.

Wakefield's writing focuses on the creative potential in all of us, with exercises and reflections from him and other writers and artists. His 'myths of creativity' can be especially useful for those who are intimidated by the prospect of creating their own *midrashim*.

Wuthnow, Robert. *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty-and Thirty-Somethings are Shaping the Future of American Religion*. Princeton University Press, 2007.

Wuthnow's study of young people in America and their impact on religion in America is especially useful if planning on working with learners in that age bracket.

#### **Sources for Midrashim:**

Bialik, Hayim Nahman and Ravintzky, Yehoshua Hana. *The Book of Legends*. Trans. William G. Braude. New York: Schocken Books, 1992.

This hefty anthology contains tales from Talmud and midrash is organized by theme (making it very easy to use) and covers both Biblical texts and Rabbinic figures.

Gellman Marc and Tilley, Debbie. *God's Mailbox*. HarperCollins, 1998.

These contemporary, often humorous midrashim, often interpret Biblical stories in ways radically different from classical midrashim, making them an excellent source to showcase the diversity possible in the midrashic process (see as well the volume, *Does God Have a Big Toe?* Also by Marc Gellman).

Ginzberg, Louis. *Legends of the Jews*. Trans. Henrietta Szold. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1913. (available online at [http://philologos.org/\\_eb-lotj/](http://philologos.org/_eb-lotj/))

These volumes incorporate many classical midrashim into a single narrative, making them accessible and easy to follow, though many of the Biblical prooftexts and rich midrashic wordplays are lacking.

Hyman, Aaron. *ספר תורה הכתובה והמסורה*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Revised and enlarged by Arthur Hyman. Israel: Dvir Publishing Co. 1979.

This invaluable text covers the entire Bible, and provides a verse-by-verse index of classical midrashim that cite each Biblical verse. If you don't have access to the Bar Ilan Responsa software, this is the next best way to comprehensively gather classical midrashic material.

Visual Midrash from the TALI Education Fund Collections, available at <http://www.tali-virtualmidrash.org.il/>

This website boasts an impressive collection of paintings and other artwork related to Biblical texts and easily sorted by story and theme.