

R202 first writing assignment

"Hence in Rabbinic Judaism there is no higher calling than to wrestle with others over the meaning of God's Torah." (*World Religions Today*, p. 99)

Explain what this idea of wrestling with God means for Jews. The textbook refers to the story from *Genesis* in which Jacob is renamed Israel (see the passage below). Go beyond this story to explain how this relationship of "wrestling" with God plays out in the lives of Jewish people. What kinds of activities might count as manifesting this relationship? And why should we include these activities in our notion of a "higher calling?" Why is striving with God considered a good thing?

maximum two pages, typed and double-spaced.
due Tuesday, October 10th.

TORAH GENESIS 32.22

right behind us.' " For he reasoned, "If I propitiate him with presents in advance, and then face him, perhaps he will show me favor." ²²And so the gift went on ahead, while he remained in camp that night.

²³That same night he arose, and taking his two wives, his two maid-servants, and his eleven children, he crossed the ford of the Jabbok. ²⁴After taking them across the stream, he sent across all his possessions. ²⁵Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn. ²⁶When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he wrenched Jacob's hip at its socket, so that the socket of his hip was strained as he wrestled with him. ²⁷Then he said, "Let me go, for dawn is breaking." But he answered, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." ²⁸Said the other, "What is your name?" He replied, "Jacob." ²⁹Said he, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven^e with d^b beings divine and human, d^d and have prevailed." ³⁰Jacob asked, "Pray tell me your name." But he said, "You must not ask my name!" And he took leave of him there. ³¹So Jacob named the place Peniel,^e meaning, "I have seen a divine being face to face, yet my life has been preserved." ³²The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping on his hip. ³³That is why the children of Israel to this day do not eat the thigh muscle that is on the socket of the hip, since Jacob's hip socket was wrenched at the thigh muscle.