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BEIT MIDRASH HAR'EL

OVERVIEW

2023

ע"ש בלדה קאופמן לינדנבאום
IN MEMORY OF BELDA KAUFMAN LINDENBAUM



Overview

Beit Midrash Har'el: The only Orthodox Beit Midrash where women and men study together for Smicha.

What makes us unique is that we do not shy away from the thorny issues emerging from contemporary sensibilities of fairness and equality that challenge Orthodoxy today. Our encounter with modernity is in a God-conscious, compassionate, inclusive, and halachically faithful way.

The curriculum of the Beit Midrash combines a rigorous course of Talmud and Halacha along with explorations of Hassidut, creative writing, comparative religion and other disciplines.

Our vision is to develop, with our students, an authentic vision of Torah life and thought which will be compelling for Orthodox Jews and others beyond denominational boundaries today.

We welcome interested and serious candidates.

The Dalai Lama wrote in his autobiography that the traditional education which he received as a child in the monasteries of Tibet left him singularly unprepared to lead his people in the 20th Century. We ensure that the same will not be said of rabbinic training today.



New Initiative from the Beit Midrash: Collaborative Seminar for the Study of the Jewish Interpretive Tradition

Jewish tradition is characterized by continual interpretation and reinterpretation of sacred texts. Although much time and effort is spent interpreting texts, insufficient thought has been given to a number of critical questions:

- How do our religious stories emerge and how are they transmitted?
- What is the relationship between our stories and our rituals?
- What are the underlying historical and psychological influences which create the context of the interpretation that is going on?
- What are our core values? Values such as democracy, fairness, justice, duty, loyalty, self-sacrifice, family, Zionism, and continuity...from where are they derived?
- Should we look at and be critical of our values? How do values influence the understanding of narratives and Halacha?
- Is the relationship between Halacha and God's will, or different versions of Torah min Hashamayim, relevant in determining Halacha?
- Are there limits to Halachic interpretation? What might they look like?



These questions are vital when we seek to address, in a fundamental way, contemporary challenges facing traditional Jews.

Most Orthodox Jews attribute literal truth to the narratives of the Torah as well as to Halachic categories and structures. For example, the distinctions that the Halacha makes between men and women or between gentiles and Jews are somehow believed to be embedded in objective reality. This, often unstated, assumption lies at the core of how modern Orthodoxy responds to - or fails to respond to - the pressing issues of the day.

A select group of Jewish Scholars and educators are exploring the hermeneutics of the interpretive tradition. The objective is to think through these historical, psychological, and anthropological issues, as well as examine mystical and Hassidic sources, to better understand the genesis and potential of our Torah narratives and Halacha.

We believe that this project will impact how we interpret our stories and our Halacha in a way that allows for greater responsiveness and compassion. Our goal is to address hard questions and our responses to them in order to engage the greatest number of committed Jews with a new, more self-aware way of reading our tradition and the possibilities which that offers.



The Rabbinic Fellowship Program

At BMH, men and women who are dedicated to the Halacha study Torah together as equals and enjoy equally the stature that Torah learning bestows within the community. The Beit Midrash Har'el Smicha track is a three-year program for men and women, seasoned pedagogues as well as promising educators and leaders, engaged in rabbinic studies in an open and supportive learning environment. The program requires 3 full days plus one evening of study each week.

Fellows are accepted to the program based on a set of criteria including academic achievements, Jewish textual proficiency, exemplary character and leadership potential.

The curriculum is designed to provide the requisite knowledge and tools to engage in communal leadership and education. Our fellows come to us with advanced Torah knowledge and a nuanced grasp of the world. The course of studies emphasizes an attitude of intellectual honesty and openness to the world as much as the content of the subject matter itself. Key topics include:

- Halacha
- Philosophy of Halacha
- Public Policy
- Spirituality
- Fundamentals of Comparative Religion

Additional topics covered over the 3 year period:

Medical Ethics and Halacha, Business Ethics and Halacha, Sociology of the Religious Community, Political Thought and Economics, Relating to the Other: Non-Jews and Jews who do not observe Halacha, LGBTQ, the Religious Bureaucracy in Israel



Impact of Har'el Alumni

Har'el alumni are visible, innovative religious leaders who are active in education, community building, social change organizations, and academic research and scholarship. Their work within a variety of religious communities and secular contexts sends an important message that deep commitment to our tradition can actually go hand in hand with promoting a more inclusive Jewish community and a more compassionate society in general.

| Alumnus | Activity | Impact |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| Rabbi Gidon Admanit | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teaches classes in Talmud and Parshat HaShavua for the elderly• Public activist for causes that promote a more democratic Israel, particularly with regard to Palestinians | Advancing peace between Israelis and Palestinians |
| Rabbi Rahel Berkovits | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Senior faculty member at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem• Lectures widely in both Israel and abroad especially on topics concerning women and Jewish law and Jewish sexual ethics• Halachic Editor and writer for "Hilchot Nashim" the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance's Halachic Source-guide Series, published by Koren Publishing• Founding member of Congregation Shira Hadasha, a halachic partnership Synagogue, and serves on their halacha committee | Fostering an inclusive and shared Israeli Jewish identity via graduate-level education, congregational rabbinics, social activism and public speaking |
| Rabbi Nadav Berger | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Faculty member of Mechon Hadar in Israel• Faculty member of Beit Midrash Har'el | Fostering an inclusive and shared Israeli Jewish identity via graduate-level education |
| Rabbi David Goodman | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rabbi of congregation Moreshet Avraham in Jerusalem• Founder and editor of the digital journal for theology "Well of Faith"• Editor of Kolot's podcast: PodDrash | Fostering an inclusive and shared Israeli Jewish identity via pulpit rabbinics and thought leadership |



| Alumnus | Activity | Impact |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Rabbi Batya Jacobs | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teaches at Yerushalayim Torah Academy High School• Designs and develops curriculum and its implementation | Fostering an inclusive and shared Israeli Jewish identity via high-school education |
| Rabbi Eliana Kinderlehrer | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developed a therapy practice to facilitate groups for new couples with more depth and understanding of halacha• She and her husband officiate at weddings together – promoting a new model of partnering leadership between men and women | Fostering an inclusive and shared Israeli Jewish identity through couples counseling and wedding officiation |
| Rabbi Dr. Meesh Hammer-Kossoy | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Director of Admissions & Social Justice Track, Pardes Institute, Jerusalem• Participates in rabbinic forums such as: Beit Hillel, Torat Chayim, and IRF | Fostering an inclusive and shared Israeli Jewish identity via graduate-level education and participation in rabbinical forums |
| Rabbi Ariel Evan Mayse | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assistant professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Stanford University | Fostering an inclusive and shared Jewish identity via graduate-level education and scholarship |
| Rabbi Elhanan Miller | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Founded 'People of the Book', an online initiative geared towards advancing religious peace dialogue• This project explains Judaism and the Jewish experience through online videos to Arab audiences• The initiative has garnered millions of views across the Arab world and has been widely reported on by American and European media | Advancing peace between Israelis and Palestinians |
| Rabbi Noam Pratzer | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Founder of "Get Out Jerusalem"• Teaches and writes about the rich resources that the halachic tradition holds for creating progressive-halachic Jewish communities | Fostering an inclusive and shared Israeli Jewish identity through outdoor activities, teaching and thought leadership |



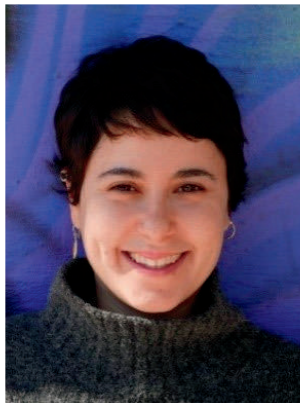
| Alumnus | Activity | Impact |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Rabbi Rachel 'Bluth' Rosenbluth | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chief Creative Officer at Living Jewishly, a thriving, welcoming, validating community open to everyone Jewish | Fostering an inclusive and shared Jewish identity |
| Rabbi Leah Shakdiel | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teaches Democratic Judaism in pre-military academies in Israel• Member of Rabbis for Human Rights, Rabbis for removing the mamzer stigma, and Rabbis for inclusion of LGBTQ in our communities | Fostering an inclusive and shared Israeli Jewish identity |
| Rabbi Shmuel Ben David | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Director of the Graduate Program at Midreshet HaShiluv Natur, a pre-military program which focuses on Jewish renewal and integrates religious and non-religious young people who seek a relevant Israeli Jewish beit midrash | Fostering an inclusive and shared Israeli Jewish identity through post-high school education |
| Rabbi Tzvika (Tzvi) Graetz | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Congregational Rabbi in Kfar Saba | Fostering an inclusive and shared Israeli Jewish identity through community rabbinics |
| Rabbi Dr. Mira Neshama Niculescu Weil | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Writes about the phenomenon of Jewish Buddhists and the current revival of Jewish Meditation• One of the first women with rabbinic Orthodox ordination to teach Jewish meditation and Jewish mindfulness.• Empowers her students to actively participate in the world of meditation retreats and yoga festivals yet still keep Shabbat and be connected to traditional Jewish observance | Fostering an inclusive and shared Israeli Jewish identity |
| Rabbi Hanan Leberman | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Founder and leader of a new community committed to halacha in Jerusalem that serves both religious and non-religious Israelis | Fostering an inclusive and shared Israeli Jewish identity |



| Alumnus | Activity | Impact |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Rabbi Shayna Abramson Kovler | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Founder of International Women's Talmud Day• Through her writing she offers halachic and spiritual guidance for those in search of an empathetic and non-judgmental religious space within the halachic system | Fostering an inclusive and shared Israeli Jewish identity |
| Rabbi Dr. Alexandra (Eliora) Peretz | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Founded Beit Midrash Shefa, a virtual Beit Midrash for French-speaking Jews• Founded the "Ruth & Akiva" program providing practical halachic teaching and guidance for baalei teshuva, converts and candidates for conversion• Lectures at the Hebrew University and part of a research think tank at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute on Partnership Peace• Research Consultant for the UN Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security | Fostering an inclusive and shared Israeli Jewish identity Advancing peace between Israelis and Palestinians |
| Rabbi Dr. Olla Solomyak | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teaches philosophy at Shalem College• Researcher focusing on issues surrounding the metaphysics of time, possibility, and the self• Connects the abstract world of halachic rules with the concrete reality of the human experience | Fostering an inclusive and shared Israeli Jewish identity |



RABBINIC FELLOWS OF BEIT MIDRASH HAR'EL 5783 (2022-2023)



Dr. Batsheva Bertman is a postdoctoral researcher at Matanel-Bar Ilan Center for the Study of French Jewish Thought. Her PhD focuses on the meaning of the word "God" in the writings of Emanuel Levinas, and she is in the process of writing a book on the development of Levinas' thought throughout the years. Batsheva was a recipient of the President's Scholarship for Outstanding Doctoral Students, and received both her bachelor's and master's degrees summa cum laude. She has worked as a psychology columnist for the online publication Kikar Shabbat, and engaged in public education for gender equality with the Common Ground Association. Batsheva is a writer of songs and short stories, and won first place in a short story competition from the Arditi Foundation for Intercultural Dialogue



Oria Feuerstein is studying for a master's degree in Jewish thought. She is a graduate of Ein Hanatziv, Chevruta, and Nishamat. Oria believes that the importance of Torah learning helps to build a person and society. As a teacher, she sees herself as a "human bridge" that will translate the central ideas of the Torah, and Halacha, for individuals that are connected to the secular world. Yet at the same time – she understands the importance of recognizing and examining issues that arise from the "secular" world that touch upon the world of Torah and halakhic jurisprudence. With the authority and weight of semikha, Oria will strive to affect the public discourse in Israel, especially around issues concerning society and matters of religion and state. Her dream is to be lead an institution of Torah study for women.




RABBINIC FELLOWS OF BEIT MIDRASH HAR'EL 5783 (2022-2023)



Meir Freedman is presently the Educational Director of The Jewish Statesmanship Center's The Identity and Public Policy Program. Meir was previously the Educational Director and Head of the Graduate Program at Midreshet HaShiluv Natur, located in the Golan Heights. Before moving to Natur in 2015, he was the head of the Jewish Renewal Program in Leadership for "Sugia" an inter-active online Beit Midrash on contemporary issues in collaboration with The Hartman Institute and the Ministry of Education. He also completed the Tikvah Fund's program of excellence and graduated from a leadership course connected with the Gesher foundation. Meir served as a commander in an infantry brigade while serving at the Otniel Hesder yeshiva. He holds an MA in Jewish History from Haifa University, and believes that in order to become the best leader that he can be he needs to deepen his learning in Halacha and Oral Law.



Atarah Ross Gale holds a BEd, from Michlalah, Jerusalem College for Women. After completing coursework toward a PhD in Bible at the Bernard Revel Graduate School, she served on the Faculty of the Drisha Institute in NYC, was an Adjunct Professor at Stern College for Women and a lecturer at Boston Hebrew College. The Har'el fellowship will enable her to incorporate Talmudic and halakhic sources more broadly and deeply into her teaching. Earning semikha will allow Atarah to leverage her considerable teaching experience to enhance her work with converts, the elder community, and in adult education in general.





RABBINIC FELLOWS OF BEIT MIDRASH HAR'EL 5783 (2022-2023)



Lara Haft is a Jewish educator, writer, and activist living in Jerusalem. She completed her B.A. in Political Science and Religious Studies at Duke University and is an alumna of Drisha, Hebrew College, and Pardes. Lara assists Rabbi Dr. Daniel Reifman with "The Talmud Skills Project," creating resources to help beginner and intermediate students improve their fluency in Gemara. She also works as an Education Intern at Temple Israel in Boston and teaches shiurim on liberation theology at Achvat Amim. Lara plans to draw from her learning at Beit Midrash Har'el to connect theology and halacha to grassroots political movements and is currently studying paradigms of borders and migration in rabbinic literature. After receiving semikha, Lara hopes to serve as a poseket, theologian, and Gemara teacher in order to make Talmud torah more accessible to everyone who seeks it.



Micha Halevi is a seasoned educator in formal and informal settings, and also serves as a Rabbi in the Israeli Army. Micha holds a Master's degree in Archeology and Israel studies from Bar Ilan University. During the last two years, he has studied in the Jewish education program at The Melton Centre for Jewish Education, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he also served as director of the department of equal opportunity at Hebrew University. Micha is interested in deepening his understanding of Halacha and developing leadership skills at Beit Midrash Har'el so that he can fulfill his ambition is to serve as a rabbinic role model for Diaspora Jewry.



RABBINIC FELLOWS OF BEIT MIDRASH HAR'EL 5783 (2022-2023)



Sara Leya Heller holds a Bachelor's degree in Education and Art Studies. She studied Torah at the Pardes Institute in Jerusalem, including their Advanced Educators Program. Her interest in Beit Midrash Har'el is two-fold; to integrate Torah and art in new ways which will inspire students to encounter art in the beit midrash, and to earn semikha to reinforce her social activism, especially on behalf of agunot.



Lisa Klug is a graduate of UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism and an accomplished writer and journalist who has published in, among other publications, the NY Times and The Atlantic. Her first book, 'Cool Jew: The Ultimate Guide for Every Member of the Tribe,' was published in 2008. During the past year, Lisa volunteered in a primary school in Uganda teaching English and content relating to Israel, Jewish life and peaceful coexistence between diverse groups, including the local tribe. Lisa is committed to contributing to a more ethical and sensitive expression of Jewish life, with greater inclusivity for the disadvantaged and disenfranchised; women, the disabled, minorities and potential olim like herself. Semikha will empower her to make greater impact as a writer, teacher and leader and to set an example of integrating Sephardi and Ashkenazi traditions




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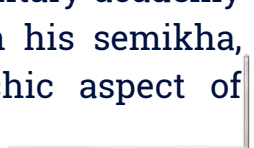
Ilana Kurshan is a graduate of Harvard University (BA, summa cum laude, History of Science) and Cambridge University (M.Phil, English literature). She is the author of "If All the Seas Were Ink," and winner of the Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature. She has translated books of Jewish interest, novels, short stories, and children's picture books. After nearly three cycles of learning daf yomi, Ilana looks to Beit Midrash Har'el

to enable her to become as familiar with the Rishonim and Acharonim as she has become with the Tannaim and Amoraim. This will empower her further to be an advocate of Torah study for all, especially women, through her personal narrative.



Natan Mazeh is a 24-year-old Yerushalmi who is an Educator and social entrepreneur. During his regular army service, he was part of a unique initiative specializing in making the army "green". In 2019, Natan studied Judaism and Philosophy in the Natur Midrasha advanced program for post-army graduates and since then has focused his learning on Talmud, Hasidut, and Bible studies.

Two years ago, Natan founded a successful NGO called Bar-Kayma, an organization dedicated to explaining the connection between Judaism and promoting a sustainable environmental policy in Israel. To date, the organization has introduced its work to at least fifty pre-military academy programs, including several Yeshivot and Midrashot. With his semikha, Natan will be better equipped for promoting the Halachic aspect of sustainability.







RABBINIC FELLOWS OF BEIT MIDRASH HAR'EL 5783 (2022-2023)



Aryeh Ronay holds an M.S. in Jewish Education from Yeshiva University and a B.A. in English and Philosophy from the University of Florida. He currently serves as Program Manager for the Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development. Previously, he spent five years working at various Jewish schools and summer camps teaching about Judaism and sustainability. Aryeh recently made Aliyah with his wife Manya and currently lives in Jerusalem. He's grateful to learn at Beit Midrash Har'el to gain the knowledge and tools needed to lead the Jewish people toward a healthier, more sustainable future.



Rivital Singer studied in Midreshet Lindenbaum and completed her IDF service with the rank of lieutenant. After participating in various learning programs in the US, she is currently completing a Bachelor's degree in Film Studies and in education. She aspires to positions of leadership in education and intends to progress from teaching in the classroom to occupying positions of greater impact such as being the principal of a high school. Rivital looks to Beit Midrash Har'el to empower her to bring a nuanced Judaism to her students and to act as a bridge between the world of the beit midrash and society at large.





RABBINIC FELLOWS OF BEIT MIDRASH HAR'EL 5783 (2022-2023)



Sara Levy Stevenson is a registered nurse, holding a BA in Nursing from Ben Gurion University. She studied Torah at Midreshet Lindenbaum and subsequently at the Pardes Institute Halacha Kollel. While learning at Pardes, Sara worked at Hadassah Ein Kerem in the Internal Medicine and Corona departments. In that context, Sara witnessed first-hand the interface between halakha, health and patients, and halakha's impact on practice in reality. Sara looks to our beit midrash and semikha because she aspires to lead in the area of intersection between Halakha and health care.



Aderet Weinberger holds an MA in social work from Hebrew University and a BA in Integrated Psycho-Criminology from Bar Ilan University. She studied Torah at the Midrasha in Migdal 'Oz. Currently, she is a clinical social worker and community coordinator at Returno, a drug rehabilitation center in Israel. Her work has brought her into intimate contact with women of the most underprivileged backgrounds including addicts and ex-convicts. Until now Torah study for women has been limited primarily to well-to-do "Ashkenazi" women. Aderet has found a desire among the women she helps to learn Torah seriously. Beit Midrash Har'el will empower her to open new horizons and hope by pursuing her ambition to establish a learning center for women from challenging socio-economic backgrounds.



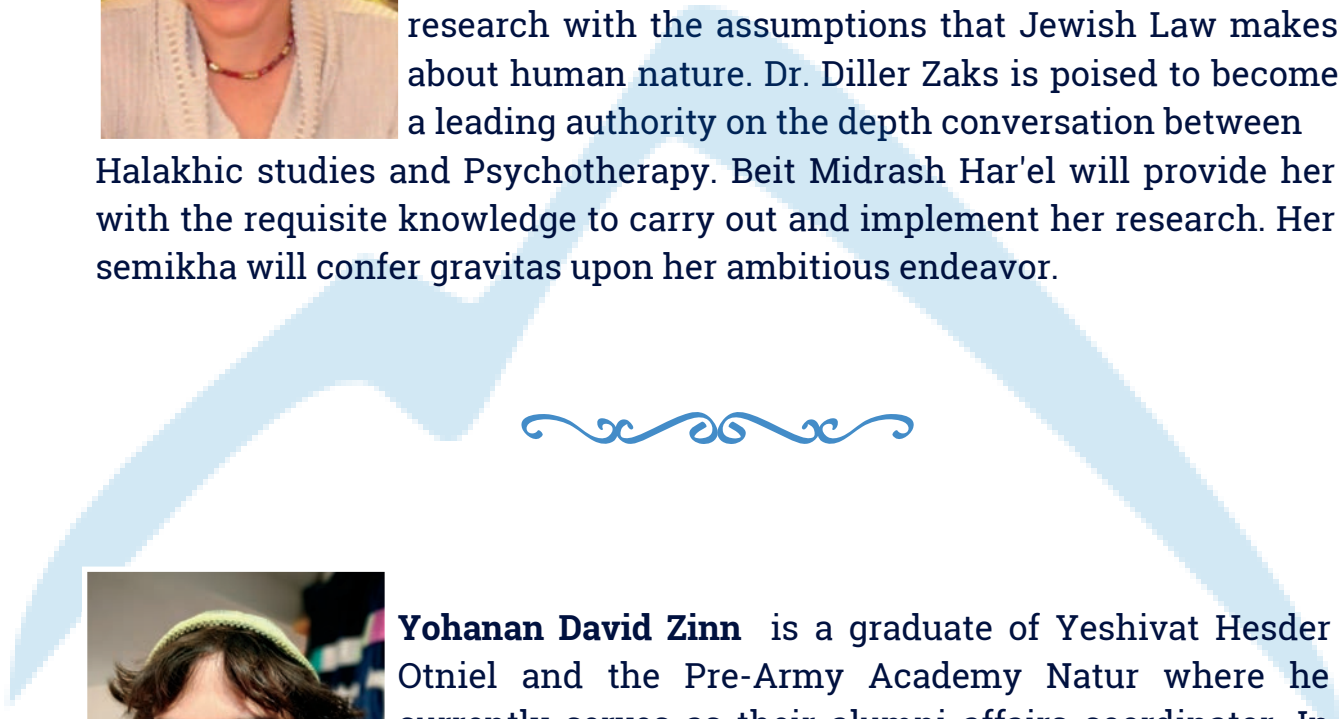
RABBINIC FELLOWS OF BEIT MIDRASH HAR'EL 5783 (2022-2023)



Dr. Galia Diller Zaks is a practicing psychotherapist with a doctorate in clinical psychology. She also holds a degree in law. She wrote her Ph.D. on, "Faith Search Theory of Attachment and Belief in God." Galia seeks to integrate her professional experience and psychological research with the assumptions that Jewish Law makes about human nature. Dr. Diller Zaks is poised to become a leading authority on the depth conversation between Halakhic studies and Psychotherapy. Beit Midrash Har'el will provide her with the requisite knowledge to carry out and implement her research. Her semikha will confer gravitas upon her ambitious endeavor.



Yohanan David Zinn is a graduate of Yeshivat Hesder Otniel and the Pre-Army Academy Natur where he currently serves as their alumni affairs coordinator. In addition, he is pursuing training to become a psychotherapist.





Plans for the future

Beit Midrash Har'el is committed to a vision of Israel where religious leaders and values play a central role inspiring broader Israeli society and the global Jewish people.

We are not a political institution. Yet, the approach we embody provides an important alternative vision of Jewish religious thought and leadership - especially at a time when more and more individuals are distanced from religious life and community...and alienated by certain religious leaders and ideologies.

Our immediate focus is on expanding Beit Midrash Har'el's two core programs:

Rabbinic Fellowship

We are now on track to continue significant growth in the Beit Midrash program. We are planning to recruit and accept another cohort of Fellows for the next academic year and need to expand our capacity in terms of faculty and classroom resources.

Collaborative Seminar for the Study of the Jewish Interpretive Tradition

This new, vital program addresses key issues facing the halachic community as we confront modernity. A "think tank" of impressive religious thinkers will take a fresh look at the interpretive process in which traditional Judaism has been engaged for millennia. The outcomes will include publications and other mechanisms designed to engage rabbis, educators, and the broader community in this thinking and conversation.

We welcome partners, collaborators, and investors in these endeavors.

Thank you,
Rabbi Herzl Hefter

Beit Midrash Har'el is the only Orthodox framework in the world comprised of extraordinary students, men, and women, engaged in rabbinic studies in an open and supportive learning environment. Our students will be the leaders of the future and are poised to impact communities both in Israel as well as the diaspora.

Please consider supporting Beit Midrash Harel, which will enable the continuation of this important endeavor: www.har-el.org/donate/



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IN MEMORY OF BELDA KAUFMAN LINDENBAUM

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