

The 2016-2017  
Open Beit Midrash  
at Kane Street Synagogue  
Sol and Lillian Goldman  
Educational Center

Explore Classical Jewish Texts with expert  
teachers, through modern lens



LEARNING AND TRANSFORMATION

**B**eit Midrash is a term given to the House of Text Study in the traditional Jewish community. Its atmosphere is fundamentally different than the secular educational schools with which we are generally more familiar. In universities, for example, classes are quiet and ordered, and in libraries the most focused study occurs in separate, private carrels. The Beit Midrash atmosphere, in contrast, is energetic, even boisterous. Students often sit around tables, and the physical proximity encourages them to listen, share, argue and imagine together.

*What explains the passion and intensity of the Beit Midrash?*

Jewish text study comes primarily not from intellectual interest, but from a love affair. From Sinai, 3300 years ago, Jews have been drawn to the study of the Torah and other sacred writings because these addressed their most important questions about life. Just as we learn about ourselves in our intimate, loving personal relationships, so study of texts helps us to discover who we want to become. As in all relationships of love, the connection to the texts is marked by reflection, unpredictability, struggle and joy.

This year, Open Beit Midrash will focus especially on the relevance of classical Jewish texts to social issues in our world today. By studying together Jewish literature from the Bible to Modern Hebrew poetry, we will explore such challenges as transgender identity, the refugee experience, and Israeli and Palestinian self-determination.

Open Beit Midrash is for learners of all levels. We value diversity. Come whether you have studied Jewish texts for twenty years or are a complete novice. All texts are studied in English translation.

Open Beit Midrash is held almost every Tuesday evening, from November 15, 2016 to March 14, 2017. We begin with a catered dinner at 6:45 and the class is from 7:30-9:00 P.M.

While the program is drop-in and you may attend as much or as little as you like, please consider the full 15 week program, in order to appreciate the journey and growth of Jewish wisdom from Sinai to the 21st Century. As detailed below, we offer a subscription option which enables you to attend all of the sessions for the year.

# Open Beit Midrash

Rabbi Samuel Weintraub, Dean

## Tuesday Evenings

November 15, 2016 to  
March 14, 2017

6:45 P.M. Dinner  
7:30 - 9:00 P.M. Class

Cost: \$40 per three week course  
(includes catered dinner), or you  
may purchase a subscription for  
\$150 for the year (all five courses,  
including all dinners). See below.

236 Kane Street  
(between Court and Clinton)  
Cobble Hill, Brooklyn



Purchase a Beit Midrash  
Subscription for the Year!  
Register Now at [kanestreet.org](http://kanestreet.org)

# Classes

## **THE TORAH OF MUSIC**

**Joey Weisenberg**

**November 15, 22, and 29, 2016**

Musician and teacher Joey Weisenberg will teach how to explore the soul of a melody – and how melody explores the soul. Students will experience music together by singing new nigunim, and then discuss the spiritual teachings of the music by studying musical-spiritual texts and stories from the Jewish tradition. Selections will be drawn from the Bible, Talmud, Medieval Commentaries, Kabbalistic Treatises, Halakhic works, as well as Chasidic writings, and will focus this year particularly on music's role in healing and spiritual reinvention. Using ideas from his book *Building Singing Communities*, Joey will also discuss strategies for bringing people together to make a music a lasting and joy-filled force in Synagogue and Jewish life. Open to anyone, regardless of musical or Jewish knowledge or singing ability. All texts will be provided in English as well as in the original Hebrew or Aramaic.

## **TRANSGENDER IN JEWISH LAW AND THE JEWISH COMMUNITY**

**Rabbi Jeffrey Fox**

**December 6, 13 and 20, 2016**

We are living in a world in which people are struggling to clarify their own personal identity. The pain of feeling as though one is in the wrong body can be excruciating. What are the implications for the Jewish community? How does Jewish Law respond to such fundamental changes? Is it possible to change your sex according to Halakha? Come and explore this challenging topic through the lens of classic and modern Jewish texts as well as contemporary questions that are being asked in our community.

# Classes

(continued)

## **“MAKE ME A SANCTUARY AND I WILL DWELL AMONG YOU” – THE TEMPLE (TABERNACLE) AND ITS RITUALS**

**Dr. Rabbi Barat Ellman**

**January 17, 24 and 31, 2017**

The theology underlying priestly religion in the Tanakh derives from God's promise to dwell among the people Israel, the conditions necessary for God to do so, and the consequences of God's doing so. By examining the nature and purpose of sacrifice and purity laws, the ritual for the Day of Atonement, the laws associated with the Sabbatical Year and Jubilee, and the Temple rituals described in Chronicles, this course will enable us to appreciate more deeply the cosmology of the priestly tradition, along with its ethical impulses and essential compassion for humankind.

## **EXILE/DIASPORA IN JEWISH THOUGHT AND HISTORY**

**Prof. David Kraemer**

**February 7, 14 and 21, 2017**

Though Jews through the centuries have been taught to long for a return to Zion, in reality Jews have mostly lived in the Diaspora, and much of what we know of and observe as Judaism is a product of that Diaspora experience. For example, there would be no holiday of Simhat Torah, no Babylonian Talmud, no Mishneh Torah, and little Bialik (who wrote most of his works before coming to Palestine) if not for the life of Jews in the Diaspora. In these sessions, we will examine Jewish attitudes toward Exile/Diaspora, from the statements of the prophets through Talmudic teachings to the lessons of the Hasidic masters. We will also examine Jewish art created in the Diaspora to more fully appreciate the influence of Diaspora host cultures on Jewish creativity.

# Classes

(continued)

## **CONFLICT AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN LITERATURE**

**Prof. Beverly Bailis**

**February 28, March 7 and 14, 2017**

This course will provide a comparative analysis of writing from 1948 onwards by Jewish-Israeli, Palestinian-Israeli and Palestinian writers. It will bring together a variety of literary texts by writers, including Natan Alterman, Avot Yeshurun, Yehudah Amichai, Mahmoud Darwish, Almog Behar and Sayed Kashua, to explore the human and personal aspect of ongoing war and political conflict. Topics under discussion will include: literary configurations of place and displacement, homecoming and exile, militarism, political commitment and dissent, and utopian and dystopian visions of the past and future. This multi-vocal view is intended to offer participants a picture of the complexity of national identity and belonging in this highly contested place, and how these fraught issues are given voice through literature.

# Faculty

## **Dr. Beverly Bailis**

currently teaches courses in Hebrew language and literature at Brooklyn College. She received her Ph. D. in Hebrew Literature from the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) and her M. A. in Jewish Civilization from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

She specializes in Modern Hebrew, Jewish Literature and Gender Studies. She has taught courses at JTS, The Women's League for Conservative Judaism, the JCC in Manhattan, and other adult education programs in New York City. Her most recent article, "Writing Against the Current: The New Jewish Woman, Modernity and the Critique of National Ideology in Y. Bershadsky's *Neged Hazerem*" appeared in *Prooftexts*.



## **Dr. Rabbi Barat Ellman**

(Jewish Theological Seminary of America, '04, '11) is a scholar of Hebrew Bible. Her areas of research interests include: biblical religion and theology, the social world reflected in the Bible, and the relationship between Biblical literature and modern counterparts. She is the

author of *Memory and Covenant: The Role of Israel's and God's Memory in Sustaining the Deuteronomic and Priestly Covenants* (Fortress, 2013), and she is currently working on Biblical conceptions of pain and suffering and on brother/sister relationships in biblical literature. A Wexner Graduate Fellow and a



# Faculty

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member of Phi Beta Kappa, Dr. Ellman is an adjunct professor of Theology at Fordham University, a member of the adjunct faculty of the Bard Prison Initiative (Bard College), and the High Holiday Cantor at Congregation Beth El in Akron, OH.

## **Rabbi Jeffrey S. Fox**

currently serves as the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Maharat, the first Orthodox institution to ordain women to function as full members of the clergy. Rabbi Fox was the first graduate of the Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School and previously served as the spiritual leader of Kehilat Keshet: The Community Synagogue of Tenafly and Englewood for nearly seven years. In addition, he has taught as part of the faculty of the Drisha Institute, Mechon Hadar and the Florence Melton Adult Education Center. He is also a Senior Rabbinic Fellow of the Shalom Harman Institute of Jerusalem. He lives in Riverdale with his wife Beth and their four boys.



**Dr. David Kraemer** is Joseph J. and Dora Abbell Librarian (=Director of The Library) at The Jewish Theological Seminary, where he has also served as Professor of Talmud and Rabbinics for many years. As Librarian, Prof. Kraemer is at the helm of the most extensive collection of Judaica—rare and contemporary—in the Western hemisphere.

On account of the size and importance of the collection, Prof. Kraemer is instrumental in setting policy and establishing vision for projects of international importance.

Prof. Kraemer is a prolific author and commenta-



# Faculty

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tor. His books include *The Mind of the Talmud* (1990), *Responses to Suffering in Classical Rabbinic Literature* (1995), *The Meanings of Death in Rabbinic Judaism* (2000), and *Jewish Eating and Identity Through the Ages* (Routledge, 2007), among others. His latest book, *Rabbinic Judaism: Space and Place*, will appear shortly.



Prof. Kraemer is a popular lecturer and teacher. He was associated for many years with CLAL—The National Jewish Center of Learning and Leadership—under whose auspices he lectured around the country. He has also been a teacher at The Skirball Institute for Adult Jewish Study (Temple Emanuel) and Meah (Hebrew College of Boston).

Dr. Kraemer lives in New York City.

**Joey Weisenberg**, a multi-instrumentalist musician, singer and composer, is the Creative Director of Mechon Hadar's Center for Jewish Communal Music, and the author of *Building Singing Communities*. He worked for seven years as the Music Director of Kane Street Synagogue, and compiled the Kane Street Song-



ster. Joey works to empower communities around the world to unlock their musical and spiritual potential. His nigunim, published in 5 CDs (which were recorded in the Kane Street Choir Loft) and a Songbook, have become popular worldwide.



# KANE STREET SYNAGOGUE

CONGREGATION BAITH ISRAEL ANSHEI EMES

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