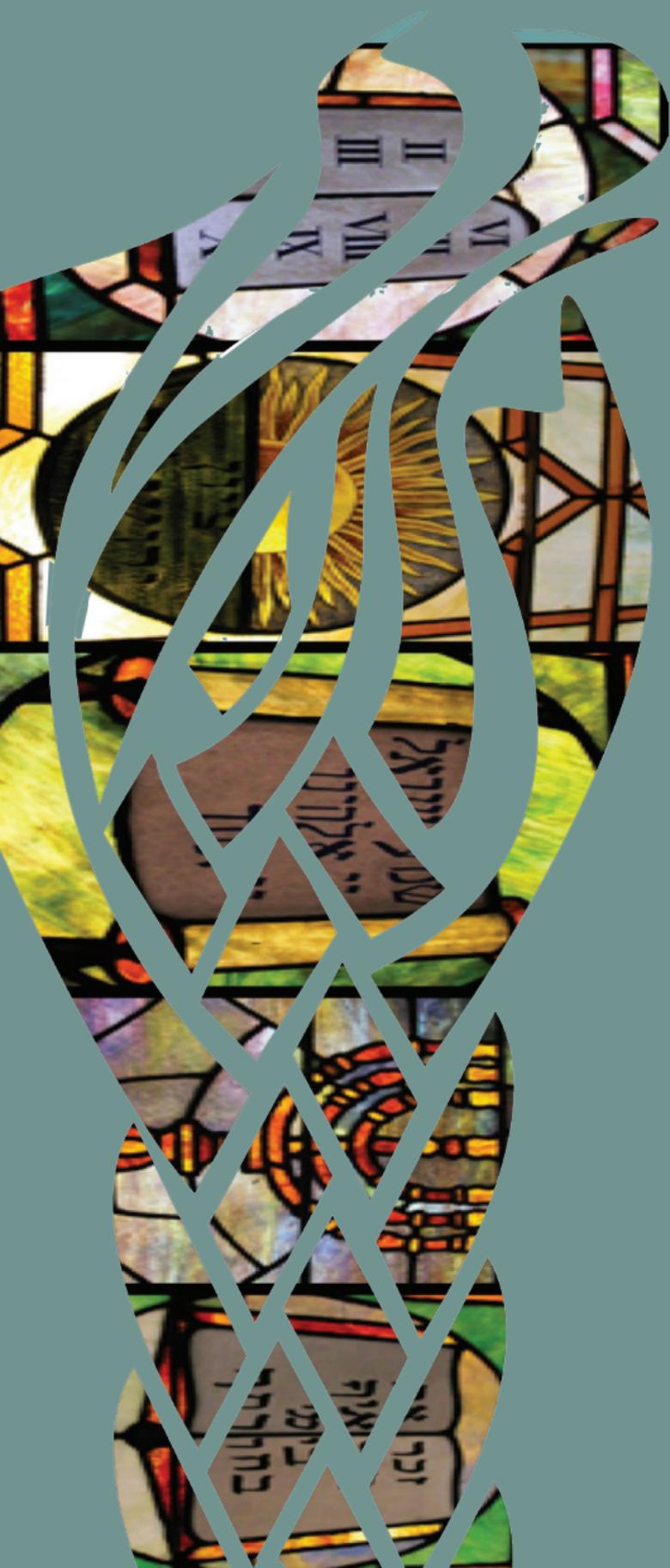


The 2017-2018
Open Beit Midrash
at Kane Street Synagogue
Sol and Lillian Goldman
Educational Center

Explore Classical Jewish Texts with expert
teachers, through modern lens

LEARNING AND TRANSFORMATION



Beit Midrash is a term given to the House of Text Study in the traditional Jewish community. Its atmosphere is fundamentally different from 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 influence and interplay of ritual, law, historical traditions and individual spiritual quest in the formation of personal and communal religious identities. By studying together Jewish literature of all ages, we will explore religious challenges as old as undeserved suffering, and as new as Shabbat observance in a digital age.

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 October 24, 2017 to March 6, 2018. We begin with a catered dinner at 6:45 and the class is from 7:30-9:00pm

While the program is drop-in and you may attend as much or as little as you like, please consider the full 18-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

October 24, 2017
to March 6, 2018

6:45pm Dinner

7:30 - 9:00pm Class

Class Cost: \$40 per three-week course (includes catered dinner), or you may purchase a subscription for \$180 for the year (all six courses, including all dinners). See below.

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

For more information contact:
BeitMidrash@kanestreet.org



Purchase a Beit Midrash
Subscription for the Year!

Register Now:

kanestreet.org/beit-midrash

Classes

Sennacherib At The Gates of Jerusalem: Bible, History, Archaeology, Theology

Dr. Aaron Koller

October 24 and 31 and November 7, 2017

The story of Sennacherib's military campaign is told not only in the biblical book of Kings, but again in Isaiah, and once more in Chronicles. What made this story so important for biblical thought? In this three-part class, we will discuss military and political aspects of the campaign and the religious aspects of the story; we will analyze the events of that year through a historical lens and a theological lens; and we will see how contemporaries understood the significance of what happened, and how that meaning shifted over the following decades. Along the way, we will be introduced to Assyrian palace art and royal inscriptions, the way the Bible writes about history, how Isaiah's reputation was made, and what makes something a miracle.

A Contemporary Spiritual Approach to The Laws of Shabbat

Rabbi Jeffrey Fox

November 14, 21 and 28, 2017

Does God care if I rip the toilet paper on Shabbat? Shabbat observance in the 21st century continues to get more and more complex. Is it all about being "unplugged" or is there more to be found in the traditional observance of the laws of Shabbat? This course will be an introduction to a spiritual approach to Shabbat through the lens of Thomas Merton. We will try to think deeply about the words that we use (and don't use) on Shabbat and how those might help create a certain kind of reality. Can we find a way to distinguish between your smart-home and your smart-phone?

Classes

(continued)

The Bible and The Greeks: Three Parallel Stories

Dr. Raymond Scheindlin

December 5, 12 and 19, 2017

A number of stories in the Bible have striking parallels in Greek literature. By observing the ways in which the telling of the stories differs in the two literatures we can gain insight into the larger differences between biblical and classical Greek culture, and ultimately between the monotheistic and polytheistic approach to life. In this series we will discuss three pairs of stories: Isaac and Iphigeneia (both involving a father's sacrificing a child to a god); Elijah and Antigone (confrontation with a monarch in the name of a religious principle); Job and Prometheus (protest against human suffering).

Slavery in The Bible

Dr. Rabbi Barat Ellman

January 9, 16 and 23, 2018

A long-standing tendency among teachers of the Hebrew Bible has been to address apologetically laws and practices that offend modern sensibilities. We often argue that although a given practice appears odious, it was a vast improvement on the practices preceding or surrounding biblical Israel. I have done this myself when teaching the slavery laws of Exodus 21, Leviticus 25, Deuteronomy 15 and Deuteronomy 20 to American students, by opening with the caveat that slavery in ancient Israel was nothing like American slavery. It was a more benevolent system. But is that the right approach? Is it ever correct? What was it like to be enslaved in ancient Israel because one was poor, had committed a crime, or was captured in war? What was life as an enslaved person like? Are the biblical laws of slavery just? Does the Bible sufficiently mitigate slavery?

This course will explore these questions through close study of the biblical material in comparison to other ancient Near Eastern laws and to contemporary criminal justice.

2017-2018 Open Beit Midrash

Classes

(continued)

Idolatry, Ritual and Morality

Dr. Daniel Greenwood

January 30 and February 6 and 13, 2018

In the modern era, Jews have debated whether the core of our tradition is a commitment to social justice, ritual or perhaps just simple self-perpetuation. But the connection, or tension, between the demands of ritual observance and of justice and morality – between the obligations of man to God versus the obligations of man to man -- is ancient. Do our traditions describe a jealous God that seeks loyalty or one that seeks decency? Do the demands of justice derive from the law of God, or do they precede it, binding even the heavens themselves? We will explore a collection of texts debating the significance of the ban on idolatry and the relationship between seemingly arbitrary rituals and fundamental demands of morality.

The Ethics of Living in Community: The Rabbinic Vision

Dr. David Kraemer

February 20 and 27 and March 6, 2018

What are the limitations and responsibilities of living in community, when one's personal rights might conflict with those of one's neighbor? The barbs and frustrations of living in close proximity go back to the earliest villages, and the rabbis had much wisdom to share in their regulation of conflict in community. We will study that wisdom and ask how it pertains to us, both personally and politically. Texts will be drawn from both the Mishnah and Talmud.



Faculty

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 ways to draw upon biblical material in contemporary social justice work. 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 member of Phi Beta Kappa, Dr. Ellman is an adjunct professor of Theology at Fordham University and on the faculty of the Bard Prison Initiative.



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. Daniel JH Greenwood is professor of law at Hofstra Law School, where he teaches and writes about the demands of justice and democracy in corporate law, torts and public law. His publications have appeared in various law reviews, popular magazines



Faculty

(continued)

and internationally, and he has co-authored amicus briefs for the US Supreme Court in cases including *Citizens United*. Previously, he served as the SJ Quinney Professor of Law at the University of Utah's SJ Quinney School of Law. Professor Greenwood is a graduate of St. Ann's, Harvard College and Yale Law School and studied political science and Judaica at the Hebrew University and the Shalom Hartman Institute.

Dr. Aaron Koller is an associate professor of Near Eastern and Jewish Studies at Yeshiva University, where he studies the ancient world of the eastern Mediterranean and Near East. His most recent book is *Esther in Ancient Jewish Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 2014). Dr. Koller has served as a visiting professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and held research fellowships at the Albright Institute for Archaeological Research and the Hartman Institute. He lives in Queens with his wife, Shira Hecht-Koller, and their children.



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 commentator.

Faculty

(continued)

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.

Dr. Raymond Scheindlin is professor of medieval Hebrew literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary and the author of books and academic studies of the subject. He is also active as a translator from Hebrew, having published a verse translation of the Book of Job and translations of other works, both literary and academic. He has been associated with the Kane Street Synagogue since 1974, serving as part-time rabbi from 1979 to 82. In addition, for over forty years, he served as High Holiday Cantor and continues to lead a Yom Kippur study session.



His books include: *Wine, Women, and Death: Medieval Hebrew Poems on the Good Life* (1986); *The Gazelle: Medieval Hebrew Poems on God, Israel, and the Soul* (1991); *A Short History of the Jewish People* (1998); *The Book of Job* (1999); and *The Song of the Distant Dove: Judah Halevi's Pilgrimage* (2008). His most recent book is *Vulture in a Cage: Poems by Solomon Ibn Gabirol*, which appeared in 2016. More information about his books and a selection of his informal essays are available on his website, raymondscheindlin.com.

2017-2018 Open Beit Midrash



KANE STREET SYNAGOGUE

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