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 address 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 risk, uncertainty, and struggle and joy.

Our Beit Midrash theme for this year is “Jewish texts and the personal life.” By studying together Jewish literature, from the Bible to Modern Hebrew Poetry, we will explore life challenges, including sibling rivalry, aging, Jewish identity, dealing with suffering, and Jewish prescriptions “for the good life.”

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 20, 2015 to April 12, 2016. We begin with a catered dinner at 6:45 and the class is from 7:30-9:00 PM.

While the program is drop-in and you may attend as much or as little as you like, please consider the full 24 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.

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**Open Beit Midrash**

Rabbi Samuel Weintraub, Dean

### Tuesday Evenings

**October 20, 2015**

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

**Cost:** $40 per three week course (includes catered dinner) or you may purchase a subscription for $80 for the year (all eight courses, including all dinners). See inside.

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

Please purchase a Beit Midrash Subscription for the Year. As many courses and catered dinners as you like for 24 evenings, $180 per person.

Scholarships available. Contact Rabbi Weintraub at rabbis@kanestreet.org

I/we would like to purchase a year subscription(s):

**NAME(S):**

**EMAIL:**

**PREFERRED PHONE:**

- Enclose please find a check payable to Kane Street Synagogue (note: Open Beit Midrash)
- or
- bill my MC/Visa/AmEx

**NUMBER:**

**EXP. DATE:**

**SIGNATURE:**

Fax this form to 718-797-1152 or mail to Kane Street Synagogue, 236 Kane Street, Brooklyn, NY 11231

**NOTE:**

- we invite you to join us in building a more knowledgeable and caring community. if you'd like to volunteer in one of the Beit Midrash committees, contact joey fillek at ronitjoy@uol.com

**QUESTIONS:**

If you have any questions about the Beit Midrash, or would like to suggest a course, contact joey fillek at ronitjoy@uol.com

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**THE TORAH OF MUSIC**

Joey Weisenberg

**October 20, 27 and November 3, 2015**

Where there is song there is prayer. (Brachot 6a) דיבר Đà רבי יוחנן:下載 Dakal

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 nignim, 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 Chassidic writings. Using ideas from his book Building Singing Communities, Joey will also discuss strategies for bringing people together to make 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.

**ARGUING WITH GOD:**

**JUSTICE IN AN UNJUST WORLD**

Professor Dan Greenwood

**November 10, 17 and 24, 2015**

At least since Abraham at Sodom, Jews have complained that the God of justice often seems to misunderstand the requirements of justice.

Approaches to this "theodicy" problem vary. The author of Job argues that God's power is so great that justice doesn't apply, or perhaps that our comprehension is so thin that we can't see the sense in which apparently unjust actually isn't. Others contend that the injustice of the world demonstrates that God is not all-powerful or doesn't even exist.

But the most distinctively Jewish response is to insist that only a just God is worthy of worship, and a just God has no choice but to respond to the demands of justice. As Michael Strassfeld teaches, if Abraham had insisted that not even one innocent person be punished, Messiah would have had to come that day.

In this course, we will explore a random selection of texts from a variety of periods in which Jews bear witness or even bring lawsuits against God or otherwise struggle with the implications of a creation in which "the wise dies like the fool ... all is mere wind." (Solomon/Kohelet).

Our texts are more likely to be stories than explicit arguments; we will seek to complicate our own views with and against them.

**MIDRASH: THE ART OF RE-IMAGINATION**

Rabbi Reuven Greenwald

**December 1, 8, and 15, 2015**

Midrash, rabbinc interpretation of Tanakh, is more than mere commentary. Through the midrashic process, the Talmudic sages do not see the text and their world as they are; rather they envision and reimagine text and world as they could be. We will delve into midrash as seen from this perspective and use it as springboard to think about effecting change in our contemporary contexts by applying models of innovative thinking.

We will study selections from the classic Rabbinc midrash on the book of Exodus, Middhuta d’Rabbii Yishmael – a bold, and understudied, source of this type of re-imagination. Community will be the overarching theme and it will be considered from three perspectives: becoming a community of multiple voices, becoming a learning community, and becoming a covenantal community.

**“UNPACKING THE CONVERSION DEBATE - ANCIENT SOURCES, MODERN QUESTIONS”**

Rabbi Jeffrey Fox

**January 5, 12 and 19, 2016**

The contemporary discourse around the process of conversion is built on a series of ancient debates. This course will seek to unpack two of the most complex issues in the modern conversion discourse - what are the requirements and status of the adjudicating court, and what level of observance is required for the potential convert? Issues of conversion force us to discerning what calls us as we look ahead.

**“SAVING MY SISTER…?” 
SISTERS AND BROTHERS IN THE BIBLE**

Dr. Rabbi Barat Ellman

**January 26, February 2 and 9, 2016**

Among the many familial relationships represented in the Bible, one stands out for its obscurity: the relationship between sisters and brothers. There are stories about brothers, stories about sisters, stories of husbands and wives, mothers and sons, and of fathers and sons. Many of these relationships are exploited for their metaphorical potential in the literature of the prophets, for instance Hosea’s symbolic marriage and Ezekiel’s parallel of sisters Sodom, Samaria and Jerusalem. But the sister-brother relationship – a recurring element in Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Canaanite mythology – goes almost unremarked upon in the Bible.

How did brothers and sisters relate to each other in ancient Israel? What was distinctive about the relationship and why was the connection between brothers and sisters of such minor interest to the authors of the Bible? In this class we will explore the representation of brother-sister relationships in the Torah, Prophets and Scriptures, namely Rebekah and Leah, Dinah and the sons of Jacob, Miriam and her two brothers, Micah and Jonathan; Tamar and Amnon, and the Shulamite of Song of Songs, to see what can be gleaned from them about this particular sibling bond.

**GROWING OLDER, GROWING DEEPER & WISER**

Rabbi Dayle Friedman

**February 16, 23 and March 1, 2016**

If we are lucky, the path beyond midlife will be long, rich and complex. The nature of life after 60 is unprecedented. Only with today's longevity do we face the possibility of decades of vitality and productivity, but also years of protracted frailty. How are we to navigate this uncharted terrain? This course will explore how we can grow deeper and wiser as we grow older. With a combination of text study, engaging exercises and Jewish spiritual practices, we will examine key challenges of aging and hope our resiliency and wisdom. Session topics will be:

- Just as midrash (imaginative exegesis) helps us to plumb the depths of the sacred texts of our traditions, midrashic inquiry can help us to find meaning and new perspective in stories from our lives.
- Mortality and fragility. Facing the finitude of our existence gives urgency to the life ahead. We will transgress our culture's taboos and examine what we might learn if we open ourselves to the challenges of mortality and frailty.
- What are you doing with the rest of your life? Mission, meaning and legacy. We will investigate Abraham and Moses as elder leaders. Why does the Torah choose as its central figures individuals who are beyond midlife? What is the special dimension that they bring to their missions? We will explore the nature of "encore" callings, what social entrepreneur Marc Freedman calls "living a legacy," and work on discerning what calls us as we look ahead.

**BIBLICAL AND RABBINIC TEACHINGS ABOUT “THE GOOD LIFE”**

Prof. David Kramer

**March 8, 15 and 22, 2016**

What is the life “well-lived”? This is a question that all human cultures and traditions—including Judaism—have asked. Thinking about Judaism’s answer to this question, we might imagine that it includes, more than anything else, observance of mitzvot and study of Torah. But what about joy and satisfaction? Does Judaism care about these at all, and, if so, how does it suggest that we achieve them? In these sessions, we will explore both biblical and rabbinc teachings that might help us answer these questions.

**ISRAEL: ONE LAND, MANY NARRATIVES**

Prof. Lisa Grant

**March 29, April 5 and 12, 2016**

Creating a national Israeli culture has been an ongoing part of the project of State-building since the early days of the modern Zionist movement. We will explore how popular culture serves as a way into engaging issues of identity and meaning. We will use music, art and poetry as lenses into three major themes that are in dynamic tension in contemporary Israeli society: 1) The Land and the People, 2) The Hero and Every person and 3) Power and Responsibility.