

Women's Beit Midrash

Come learn with us . . . **Tuesdays 8:00–9:30 PM**

Learn Torah with women of all ages and backgrounds

We aim to create a Beit Midrash (study hall) where women of all backgrounds can learn side by side. The wisdom and breadth of knowledge of more experienced students will combine with the fresh eyes and curiosity of those new to this kind of learning to build a fertile, exciting and inspiring women's study community.

COURSES

To Everything there is a Season— Understanding the Proverbial and Experiential Wisdom of Kohelet (Ecclesiastes)

Deborah Schick Laufer | October 9, 16, 23, 30

We will identify the central themes of Kohelet, exploring basic wisdom genres and the books of wisdom included in Tanach (the Bible). We will compare Jewish and world philosophical thought reflected in the text, approaches to justice in Kohelet and similar texts such as King Solomon's dedication of the Temple, and we will try to understand why Kohelet is read on Shabbat Chol Hamoed Sukkot (the intermediary Sabbath of Tabernacles).

Women and Tefillah: The Role of Women in Communal Prayer

Aviva Krauss | November 6, 13, 20, 27

What is a women's obligation in prayer? What role does Judaism give to women in communal prayer? We will explore the Talmudic and Rabbinic sources in an attempt to dissect the halachic perspective with regard to inclusivity in communal prayer, how that perspective has evolved, and what values and principles have been taken into account to allow for that evolution.

The Real Miracle of Chanukah

Ilana Lipman | December 4, 11, 18

Was Chanukah really a courageous Jewish fight for freedom, or was there more to it than that? If the Macabees were such heroes, why do we never hear of them again after the story of Chanukah? In this class we will examine sources about Chanukah with the goal of understanding what really happened during this time in Jewish history.

Ohev Sholom

1600 Jonquil Street NW Washington, DC
Metro: Silver Spring station (red line)

The Dynasty of David

Rivky Schramm Krestt | January 8, 15, 22, 29

Four classes on Samuel, Saul, David, and Solomon. We will investigate the establishment of the Jewish Kingdom and the political and religious issues that surrounded it.

Taharat Hamishpacha: The Jewish Laws of Family Purity

Laura Shaw Frank | February 5, 12, 19, 26

In this course, we will study and discuss the halakhic and philosophical underpinnings of the Jewish laws of family purity. Whether you have been going to the mikva for 20 years and want to take a look back at the halachic basis for what you do, or whether you have never been to a mikva but always wanted to know what Taharat Hamishpacha was all about, this course is for you! We will examine source material from the Torah, the Gemara and the poskim and work together to understand not only the laws of Taharat Hamishpacha, but the philosophical and theological basis for the laws. We will also discuss women's experiences with observing these laws as well as learning about the new "Yoatzot Halacha"—women trained to answer halachic questions in this area.

The Idol and the Concubine: Lessons from the Book of Judges

Esther Eisenman | March 4, 11, 18, 25

The last stories in the Book of Judges, concerning the Idol of Micha and the Concubine in Givah, are two of the most negative stories in Tanach and here they are found back to back. How and why are the stories connected? Are there other stories in Tanach that come in pairs? Why are the stories placed at the end of the book, perhaps out of chronological order?

Adult Bat Mitzvah Class

Aliza Sperling | Tuesday nights: 7–8 PM, January 15–March 18

According to Jewish law, a girl becomes a Bat Mitzvah when she turns 12 whether or not she celebrates the occasion. Some girls celebrate this milestone by learning Torah in honor of their becoming a Bat Mitzvah. If you never had the opportunity to study Torah to mark your entry into the world of Mitzvot—or even if you did!—come join our adult Bat Mitzvah program. We will study Shabbat from Biblical, halakhic, and theological perspectives. Learning together, we will gain a deeper understanding of the laws of Shabbat. At the end of the course, we will celebrate with a special Women's Tefillah service.

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How “Partners in Learning” works:

- A specific text is chosen weekly. The teacher begins the class by introducing the topic and the text.
- For the next half hour we will work in groups of two or more, studying *b'chevruta* (with a learning partner).
- We'll match you with a learning partner appropriate to your background: those who have extensive backgrounds can study the original texts and those who don't know Hebrew can study the text in translation. During this period, “floating” teachers will help those who need extra assistance. At the end of this half hour block, we will reconvene for a class based on the *chevruta* session.
- Women of all backgrounds are encouraged to attend.

For more information:

Contact Aliza Sperling:
alizasperling@yahoo.com

This program is partially supported by a gift in memory of Helen Norman Atkins and Jeanne Kalish Samuels and their commitment to provide new educational opportunities for women and children.

TEACHERS

Deborah Schick Laufer is manager of workplace mediation services at the World Bank Group. She has a JD from Georgetown University Law Center. She has been a teacher and lecturer on Judaic subjects throughout the Washington, DC area.

Aviva Krauss is a Clinical Associate in Stem Cell Transplant at Children's National Medical Center in Washington, DC, and a research fellow at the National Institutes of Health. She received her BA in Philosophy and Judaic Studies from Stern College for Women of Yeshiva University, and studied at Midreshet Lindenbaum in Jerusalem. She is a former Torat Miriam Scholar.

Ilana Lipman teaches psychology and Rabbinics at the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School. She has a master's degree in Jewish Education from Hebrew University and a certificate of advanced Jewish text study from the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies.

Rivky Schramm Krestt is the Department Chair of Tanach at the Melvin J. Berman Hebrew Academy of Greater Washington. She previously taught at Stern Hebrew High School in Philadelphia. She is currently a M.A. candidate at the University of Maryland in Curriculum Theory.

Laura Shaw Frank is a teacher of Tanach and Jewish History at the Beth Tfiloh Dahan Community High School in Baltimore, Maryland. A graduate of Columbia Law School, Laura worked as a commercial litigator for 10 years before turning to a career in Jewish education. Named one of the "Top Ten Young Jews" by the Baltimore Jewish Times in 2005, Laura is a founding board member of the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance.

Esther Eisenman is assistant principal at the Beth Tefiloh Dahan Community High School in Baltimore. She frequently teaches adult education classes in Baltimore, particularly at Mercaz: The Beth Tfiloh Dahan Center for Jewish Life and Learning. She practiced law for 10 years prior to becoming a Jewish educator.

Aliza Sperling teaches Bible and rabbinics at the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School and is director of the Women's Beit Midrash and Makom: Finding a Place for Our Growing Girls at Ohev Sholom. She received her JD from NYU and has studied at Midreshet Lindenbaum, Michlalah, Masoret, Matan, and Hebrew University.

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