



« **Rabbi Prof. Daniel Sperber**

President of the Jesselson Institute for Advanced Torah Studies

Rabbi Prof. Daniel Sperber, Israel Prize laureate (1992), is the author of a multi-volume series on the history of Jewish law and customs, as well as dozens of books and hundreds of monographs dealing with a wide range of halakhic, linguistic and historical subjects. He has taught Jewish history and Talmud at Bar-Ilan University since 1968, and has served as a Jerusalem communal rabbi for the last 40 years. The former Chairman of the Committee on Zionist Religious Education at the Ministry of Education, he has been involved in interreligious dialogue for several decades, also representing the Israeli rabbinate in this capacity.

“The Beit Midrash seeks to develop independent, creative thinking and cultivate understanding of both halakhic sources and Jewish thought. Thus may we create a pool of influential intellectuals in diverse scientific and scholarly fields, whose academic expertise is enriched by well-rooted Jewish traditions and values.”

Rabbi Shabtai Rappoport »

Head of the Beit Midrash

A noted halakhic expert in medicine and organ transplants, Rabbi Shabtai Rappoport was ordained by the late Torah sage, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein and is a trusted editor of his writings. In 2008, the veteran Hesder Yeshiva head came to Bar-Ilan University with an agenda: to create a vibrant presence in the Beit Midrash with thought-provoking study and to promote Torah and science initiatives which reflect the University's founding goals. As part of his vision, he founded the highly successful *Nitzotzot* program which “explores how the latest scientific and technological breakthroughs challenge Torah thinking and shed light on halakhic and philosophical issues.”



“The Beit Midrash uniquely enables each and every one of our students to create their own individualized approach to Torah studies, based on past and present experiences, and to incorporate it into the wellspring of Torah and Jewish heritage for the benefit of the entire nation.”



Yair Ronen

Honors Scholar, Recipient of the Green and Shulich Leader Scholarships

“I was drawn to BIU mainly because of the Beit Midrash – I wanted to attend a university that combines intensive, in-depth Torah studies with high standards of academic excellence. My goal is to obtain semicha in four years, alongside my BSc in computer engineering.”

Rabbi Daniel Reifman

Doctoral Fellow of Excellence

“My dual pursuits in the hermeneutics program and at the Beit Midrash are enabling me to raise awareness of how we read and interpret texts, and to get past the point where people on both sides are stuck, because no one is giving you the whole picture.”



**Torah Creativity
& Leadership**



The Beit Midrash: Flagship of BIU's "Torah U'Madah" Ideal

The Beit Midrash in the Ludwig and Erica Jesselson Institute for Advanced Torah Studies uniquely enables BIU students to combine intense, high-level Torah scholarship with their academic training in diverse fields.

Gemara study – a chief focus – is conducted in the traditional yeshiva format. Those with a strong Torah background not only engage in learning but also teach and pair up in *havrutot* with their more junior colleagues. A chief aim is to qualify students to study and teach Torah on the highest possible level, so that they may continue to integrate Torah studies with their future professions.

The Beit Midrash actively encourages Torah creativity and innovation while placing much emphasis on understanding the process and continuum of Jewish law. Committed to building the backbone of religious Zionism, the Beit Midrash encourages students to forge their own unique Torah outlook and to deepen understanding of the interface between Torah and the contemporary world.

It is a great source of pride that since its founding in 1972, the Beit Midrash has produced more than a thousand graduates who figure prominently in the Israeli government, hi-tech industry, business, academia, education, the Rabbinat, law and other fields, providing exemplary *Torah U'Madah* models.

A Multitude of Programs

Each year, some **250 men** attend the Beit Midrash, engaging in *havruta* (paired) learning and *shiurim*. Most are enrolled in the **Gemara Program**, with the "**Learn-When-You-Can**" project providing flexible solutions to students majoring in time-intensive fields such as the sciences. Some **18 lectures** in philosophy, Hasidism, and the history of *halakha* are also given annually.

From all backgrounds, and at all stages of learning (BA – PhD), students run the gamut from Hesder Yeshiva graduates to men from secular backgrounds who wish to learn more about their Jewish heritage.

- The **Halakha Program** prepares aspiring community and municipal rabbis for the rigorous Israeli Chief Rabbinat exams. Indeed, throughout the years, hundreds of Beit Midrash students have received *semicha* from the Israeli Rabbinat. The **ROM Program** prepares outstanding *Atuda'im* (students who have deferred army service in order to obtain a degree) for the Rabbanut exams. The **Rakowitz Center for the Community Rabbinat in Israel** has trained 50 ordained rabbis and their wives to serve proactively in secular and religious communities around Israel.

- The **PhD Program** enables BIU Doctoral Fellows of Excellence to explore and publish in a specific Talmudic area that has relevance to contemporary hot button issues. The goal is to publish a book of articles on a different subject each year.

- The **Nitzotzot Forum** regularly convenes scientists, rabbinical scholars and PhD candidates to explore how research breakthroughs (e.g., synthetic biology, brain-machine interfaces) impact upon

Torah thought and vice versa. *Nitzotzot* also co-sponsors with the Ministry of Education an annual conference on *Gemara* study for National Religious school teachers, and has prepared an array of university enrichment courses. **Nitzotzot Shachar**, the year-long academic seminar for outstanding PhD candidates from all Israeli universities, grants fellowships to students to examine cutting-edge research from a Jewish perspective.

- The **Johanne and Norman Sternthal Reshit Program** equips students from secular backgrounds with a deeper understanding of Jewish values and tradition through study of Bible, Talmud and Jewish philosophy.

- Overseas students in the one-year "**Israel Experience**" gap program take English-language Torah classes at the Beit Midrash.

Cooperation with Leading Academic Institutions

The Beit Midrash conducts joint research in Jewish and religious studies with leading academic institutions in Israel and abroad. For example, cooperation with the University of Leipzig focuses on the relationship between faith and ceremony as a means of drawing people closer to religion; conflicts in the Book of Genesis and the lessons that may be learned for resolving such conflicts in contemporary times; and the impact of the Holocaust on *halakha* and faith.

Community Outreach

Beit Midrash community outreach includes the popular Friday Kollel; a "Yeshiva" during the week for judges, academicians and retirees; lecture series and programs prior to the Jewish holidays; and the "Ask the Rabbi" service which provides answers to religious questions via email or fax.