Our goal is to ensure that every student on campus is given the opportunity to strengthen their Jewish identity. Since its inception, the Midrasha has educated future women leaders who are not only experts in their chosen academic disciplines, but who have also acquired profound Jewish knowledge that will enable them to figure prominently in the public Jewish discourse, both in Israel and worldwide.

A lecturer at the Midrasha and the Department of Hebrew and Semitic Languages, Dr. Motirot Shabanat is a product of the Midrasha from a decade ago. Some of her former classmates are prominent educators who also teach at the Midrasha and are role models for our students,” she says. "Believing that in this past decade the Midrasha has made a conscious effort to focus on the development of women leaders, the Bial Midrasha, she says, "helps in drawing women to in-depth Oral Law study. In our generation, women who complete their PhDs and gain prominence in their fields must also be conversant with halacha and gemara and able to influence the public discourse on marriage, divorce and other issues."
A Unique Torah Institution in a University Setting

The Midresha in the Ludwig and Etica Jesselson Institute for Advanced Torah Studies is located at the heart of Bar-Ilan University’s main campus. As a university-based institution, the Midresha is not just a unstated Torah experience for women, but rather one that is grounded in academically scholarly and scientific learning and professional self-fulfillment alongside the Torah experience. With a faculty of more than 13 Torah experts, drawn from a broad spectrum of Jewish scholarship and religious orientation, the Midresha strives to position women in Jewish leadership roles by empowering them to play an influential role in the modern Jewish world as well as the dynamic processes of halachic interpretation and guidance. It accomplishes this goal from an academic point of view, by complementing and enhancing the undergraduate and graduate studies of its students, and also through the Midrash Mitzva style learning that is the hallmark of Torah study.

The Midresha is open to all faculty and students of Bar-Ilan who wish to study Jewish texts with an emphasis on the relevance of Jewish thought to all areas of life. In our experience, these opportunities for shared learning and cross-disciplinary discussions inspire new avenues of interpretation and bridge the gaps between differing world-views. Students are drawn to the nurturing and supportive environment of the Midresha, whether through special events, the Midrash Mitzva atmosphere, or the newly established Clubroom.

“Our goal is to ensure that every student on campus is given the opportunity to strengthen their Jewish identity.”

A Multitude of Programs and Outreach Initiatives

Over 750 students participate annually in a variety of Midresha programs comprising some 80 courses that cater to all levels of Jewish educational background. Beginners, students with extensive background in Talmudic study, and advanced students interested in advanced, high-level Torah scholarship. In the-Rabi program, Midresha students may be recognized in lieu of the University’s Basic Jewish Studies requirements.

- The biblical program is designed for students interested in advanced study of Jewish law and Talmud in pairs (talmudic). In the Rabi program, students from secular backgrounds focus on Jewish identity through narratives of Jewish texts.
- The Yiskor program is for outstanding students who dedicate time to studying halakha in additional to their regular graduate studies.
- The unique courses offer new students the opportunity to examine the halakhic background of cases presently being argued before Israel’s constitutional courts in depth.
- A prestigious Torah Fellowship workshop for exceptional students addresses core issues on the Israeli public agenda through the prism of Jewish sources, building on an elite cadre of Jewish leaders of the future.

Approximately 60 overseas students participate in the Midresha through a program called “The Israel Experience.” These women come to study at Bar-Ilan for a semester or a year. During this time they devote half a day of study at the Midresha in specially-designed classes taught in English.

- A special program is available for training pre-marital coaches.
- Shabbat is a new program catering to students who have completed their military or national service but are not yet registered at the University, introducing them to Jewish learning and helping them decide which framework best suits their desire to continue their Torah studies.

In addition to programs offered to students, the Midresha organizes seminars, lectures, and other public forums: open to the community at large prior to Jewish holidays. The Midresha thus serves as a magnet for women, both on and off campus, who wish to further their Jewish knowledge and strengthen their Jewish identity.