



Dr. Tova Ganzel  
Director of the Midrasha

Dr. Tova Ganzel completed her PhD in the Bible Department at BIU and is one of Israel's first trained yo'atzot halakha (women's halakhic advisors). A former Tikvah Fellow, she is the recipient of a number of other prestigious academic awards and grants. She has published over 20 articles, book chapters and encyclopedia entries and is the author of *A Visionary's Oracles – From Destruction to Restoration, Studies in the Prophecies of Ezekiel* (Tevunot-Herzog, Alon Shvut 2012). A highly sought-after lecturer, Dr. Ganzel frequently addresses international scholarly conferences and seminars.

“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.”

### Nurturing Future Leaders at the Midrasha

“I believe in the importance of Torah study and its impact on my life,” says Hadas Nevenzal, a PhD life sciences candidate, who is specializing in nanotechnology. “I have always been interested in gemara – which is so central to Jewish thought and life – but I never had an opportunity to engage in intensive study until now.”



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A lecturer at the Midrasha and the Department of Hebrew and Semitic Languages, Dr. Meirav Tubul Kahana is a product of the Midrasha from a decade ago. “Some of my former classmates are prominent educators who also teach at the Midrasha and are role models for our students,” she says, relating that in the past decade the Midrasha has made a conscious effort to bolster its ranks with more women teachers.

The Beit Midrash, she says, fills a critical role “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 halakha and gemara and able to influence the public discourse on marriage, divorce and other issues.”



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Torah Studies



# Torah and Leadership

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## A Unique Torah Institution in a University Setting

The Midrasha in the Ludwig and Erica Jesselson Institute for Advanced Torah Studies is located at the heart of Bar-Ilan University's main campus. As a university-based institution, the Midrasha is not just a sequestered Torah experience for women, but rather one that is grounded in worldly, scholarly and scientific learning and professional self-fulfillment alongside the Torah experience.

With a faculty of more than **33 Torah experts**, drawn from a broad spectrum of Jewish scholarship and religious orientation, the Midrasha strives to position women in Jewish leadership roles by empowering them to play an influential role in the evolving Jewish world as well as the dynamic processes of halakhic interpretation and guidance. It accomplishes this goal from both an academic point of view, by complementing and enhancing the undergraduate and graduate studies of its students, and also through Beit Midrash-style learning that is the hallmark of Torah study.

The Midrasha is open to all faculty and students of BIU 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 Midrasha, whether through special events, the Beit Midrash atmosphere, or the newly established Clubroom.



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## A Multitude of Programs and Outreach Initiatives

Over **750 students** participate annually in a variety of Midrasha programs comprising some **80 courses** that cater to all levels of Jewish educational background: Beginners, students with extensive background in Torah study, as well as students interested in advanced, high-level Torah scholarship. In the **Main** program, Midrasha studies may be recognized in lieu of the University's Basic Jewish Studies requirements.

- The **Metivta** program is designed for guided study of Jewish Law or Talmud in pairs (havrutot).
- In the **Reshit** program, students from secular backgrounds focus on Jewish identity through familiarity with Jewish texts.
- The **Doctoral** program is for outstanding students who dedicate time to studying Talmud in addition to their regular graduate studies.
- Two unique courses offer **law students** the opportunity to examine the halakhic background of cases presently being argued before Israel's rabbinical courts in depth.
- A prestigious **Tikvah Fellowship** workshop for exceptional students addresses core issues on the Israeli public agenda through the prism of Jewish sources, building an elite cadre of Jewish leaders of the future.
- Approximately **80 overseas students** participate in the Midrasha through a program called **“The Israel Experience.”** These women come to study at BIU for a semester or a year. During this time they devote half a day of study at the Midrasha in specially-designed classes taught in English.
- A special program is available for **training pre-marital coaches.**
- **Etnahta** 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 Midrasha organizes **seminars, lectures, and other public forums** open to the **community-at-large** prior to Jewish holidays. The Midrasha thus serves as a magnet for women, both on and off campus, who wish to further their Jewish knowledge and strengthen their Jewish identity.