

PROSPECTUS

2025 / 5785

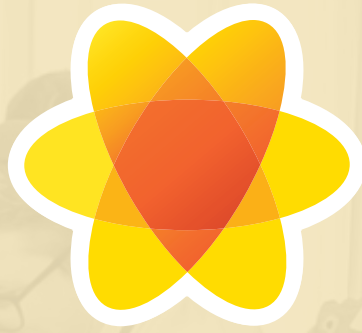


The Academy
of Jewish Thought and Learning

The **Community** of **Thinkers**

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The Academy
of Jewish Thought and Learning

Welcome
to the
Community
of Thinkers

Welcome to the Community of Thinkers

ABOUT US

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to create a vibrant, Modern-Orthodox programme for Jewish learning, thought and scholarship, that inspires our community with a lifelong love of Jewish learning and Israel; and to utilise this platform to impact broader society in all ways.

OUR IMPACT AND VISION

Our vision is for the Academy to be the heartbeat of the traditional, Zionist South African Jewish community, ensuring its values are relevant and dynamic for the next generation of Jews, with inspired, skilled and trained educators and leaders.

OUR VALUES

1. *Ivdu et Hashem beSimchah* – we sense a real joy and privilege in everything we do, especially the hard things, as part of our mission for Hashem.
2. *Yozmah* – innovate and take the initiative!
3. *Yosher* – authenticity, doing the outstandingly right thing.
4. *Ichpatiyut* – Care! Caring for our team and all our students with empathy.
5. *Rosh Gadol* – maintaining a big picture view.
6. *Yachad* – One for all and all for one – every challenge is ours!
7. *Ein lo yachol, yeish rak lo rotzeh* – We deliver on our commitments, no matter what.
8. *Miktzo'iyut* – Professionalism in every way.
9. *Eizehu chacham? Halomed mikol adam* – Constant learning and improvement and actively seeking constructive input on our strengths and weaknesses.

OUR GOALS

1. To educate adults by increasing their Jewish knowledge, improving their textual skills and building their confidence as independent learners.
2. To develop outstanding educators who teach with love, respect, openness, intellectual honesty and creativity.
3. To study with *Yirat Shamayim*, a profound reverence for Hashem, in order to appreciate Jewish knowledge within its G-dly context.
4. To promote the full participation of women in Jewish learning and teaching.
5. To foster a culture of love for knowledge, higher learning and open discussion within the field of Jewish learning.
6. To promote a culture of respect and tolerance within the field of Jewish learning.
7. To encourage our students to help create this culture through passing on their own knowledge and experiences at home and within their own communities.
8. To exchange ideas at the highest level through academic research and the advanced study of traditional Jewish texts.
9. To deepen our community's understanding and love for Israel.
10. To examine critical issues facing modern society with intellectual honesty, integrity and courage; in order to understand and develop Torah responses.
11. To work with the wider community in achieving these goals.

OUR LEADERSHIP

Chairperson: Stacey Dembo

Treasurer: Menachem Kay

Dean: Rabbi Ramon Widmonte

Member: Michael Sternberg

Member: Dorothy Sank



Our Course DNA



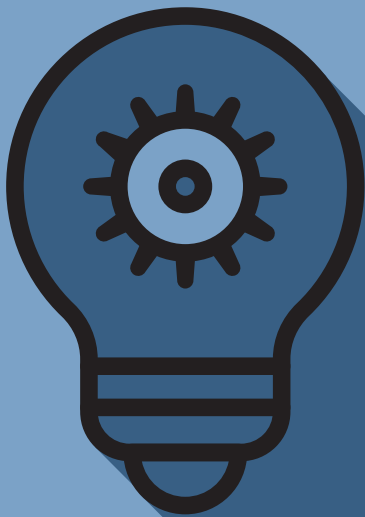
SYSTEMIC AND INTEGRATED

Often Jewish knowledge is presented eclectically. The Academy begins all learning by ensuring that a systemic, integrated high-level map is first grasped, before greater depth is explored.



LEARNER-CENTRIC

Our learning process centres on the learner - empowering each student to want to, and to feel comfortable to, learn further, engage in discussion and directly learn key texts.



INNOVATION

The Academy innovates in course content and pedagogy.



RELEVANCE

Torah is the most relevant source of knowledge and wisdom, we simply present it.



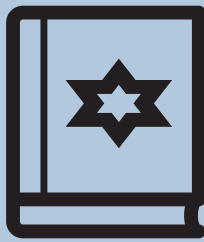
The Academy Then and Now

ADULT EDUCATION

THEN

1

Course



25

Students



Big Vision



NOW

> 200

Innovative
Courses Created

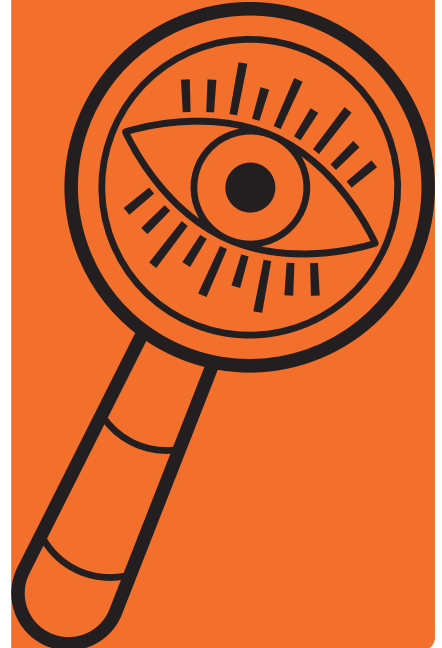


> 20,000

Students Accessing
Material Worldwide



**Bigger
Vision**



10 Years building a
Community of Thinkers



The Academy
of Jewish Thought and Learning

The Academy Learning Pathway

The Academy believes in an ongoing learning experience where, step by step, question by insight, one builds one's knowledge. To that end, we have developed The Academy Learning Pathway.

Bird's-eye View

Introductory courses:
A high-level overview
of a subject or text.

In a Nutshell

Unpacking themes, patterns and principles
of larger subjects, concepts or texts –
in six sessions or less.

Deeper Dive

Delving deeper into a book or topic,
combining more text and analysis, while
keeping the high-level view in mind.

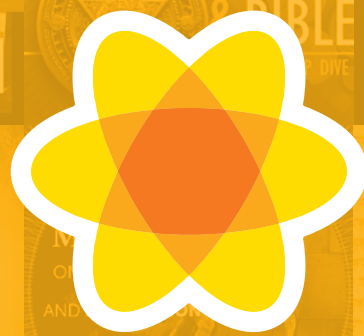
Current, Contemporary and Events

In a constantly-changing world,
these sessions aim to bring
clarity and ensure that we're
constantly thinking.

In-Depth Study / Beit Midrash

Advanced study of a particular text;
usually a year-long course.





The Academy

of Jewish Thought and Learning

ACADEMY COURSES



Bird's-Eye View

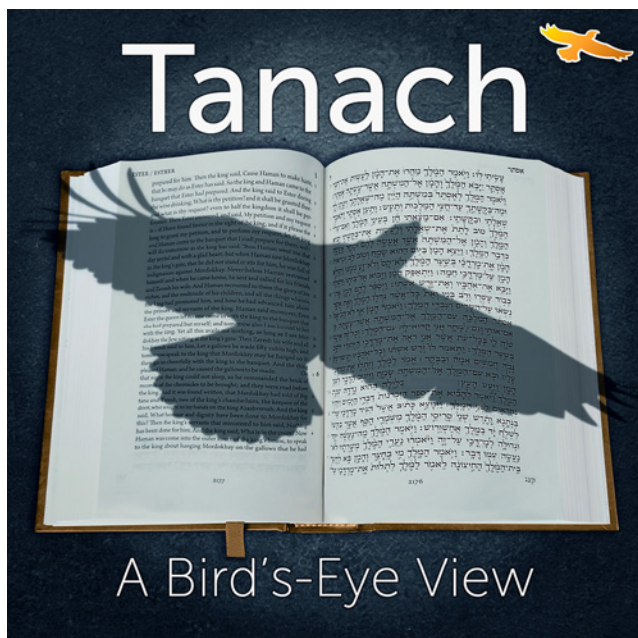


ZIONISM – A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW | 1 SESSION

A view from 40,000 feet up over 4,000 years

The land of Israel constitutes 0.13% of the world's landmass, and Jews 0.19% of the world's population – that's nothing! In Twain's famous words, both are "a nebulous puff of star dust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way." But our ideas and our love-hate affair with a tiny piece of barren land in Asia has shaped three world religions, almost caused nuclear war several times. Sometimes it just seems too improbable and impossible to put into perspective.

This course-in-one-session provides the long, aerial view – 4,000 years from 40,000 feet up. How have the long-term trends emerged and repeated themselves in an endless dancing pattern of history which help it all make sense?



TANACH – A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW | 1 SESSION

Not for nothing is the Tanach (Hebrew Bible) known as "The Book of Books". For millennia, it has stirred debate, dissension, war, love, cruelty and hope. But inspiring as it is, we are often daunted at the sheer size of it – 24 books that span thousands of years, 22, 000 verses and over 300, 000 Hebrew words (nearly a million English words)!

The course takes a step back, takes flight and provides an aerial view of this awesome work. At this height, students gain insight into its central themes and messages, and dip into its understanding of G-d, humanity and history – A Bird's-Eye View of the greatest work of literature and theology in history.





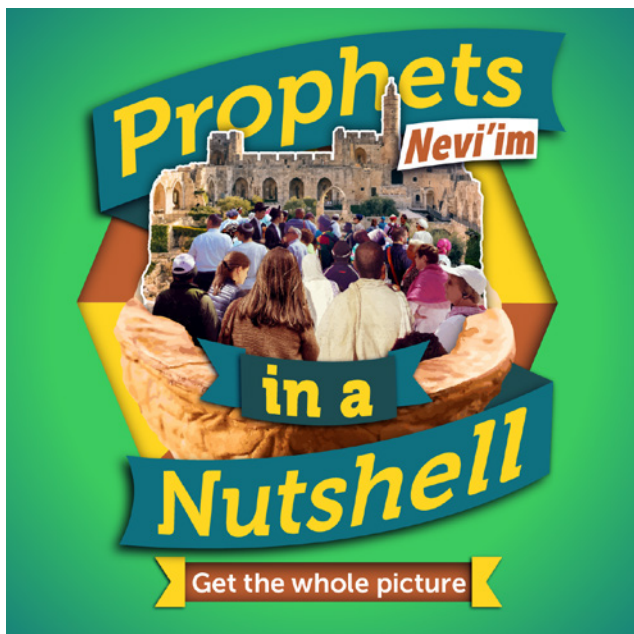
In a Nutshell



TORAH IN A NUTSHELL | 6 SESSIONS

What would it be like to comprehend the Chumash (the first five books of the Torah) as a complete, organic entity? Not a bit here and a bit there, but a solid grasp of how it all fits together along with a grounding in all the foundation concepts? This pioneering course from the London School of Jewish Studies, under the late Rabbi Lord Sacks ztz'l, has given thousands of people worldwide a paradigm-shifting perspective in just 6 sessions!

The course examines the Chumash from seven key perspectives while at the same time giving over a methodology for analysing any part of the Chumash, utilising classic methods of analysis. The interactive section of the course helps one acquire knowledge and context way beyond what one achieves in a passive process. However, no knowledge of Hebrew or extensive background is needed.



PROPHETS (NEVI'IM) IN A NUTSHELL 6 SESSIONS

When Israel stood on the banks of the Jordan, ready to take up their destiny in the Land, a thousand years of history began. From tribal confederation to kingdom, independence to exile, the books of the Nevi'im (Prophets) comprise a complex sequel to the Torah. Where the Torah's vision is that of the perfect society, the 19 Nevi'im books, part narrative, part prophecy, show what really happened. What happened to the implementation of the Abrahamic and Sinaitic visions? What were the failures and successes of the first Israel? By taking an aerial view of so many books, we identify themes and patterns to ask; what is the message of the Nevi'im?



HAFTARAH IN A NUTSHELL | 4 SESSIONS

The Haftarah is a passage from the Nevi'im (Prophets) that is recited after Torah reading on Shabbat and Festival mornings (and on some afternoons too). The origins of this reading are lost in the mists of time. Was it in response to persecution, polemics or was it part of an ancient educational methodology? Why were these particular chapters or portions chosen? How did this come to be associated with bar-mitzvah celebrations? Sadly, for many, the reading of the Haftarah has become an opportunity to escape the shul service and get a schnapps; swapping a 2,000-year-old for a 12-year-old. This course is an opportunity to unpack this often-overlooked part of the shul service, and discover some of the most beautiful texts in the world, their prophetic authors, the patterns that they created – and a very different blend.





ZIONISM IN A NUTSHELL | 4 SESSIONS

For so many Jews, Zionism is a word that raises the most powerful of emotions. But our knowledge of it is patchy and disconnected. Imagine getting the whole picture – the core patterns of Zionism which have recurred for the past 4,000 years and are currently playing out once more. Imagine having the tools to grasp most core issues and frame them in terms of history, space, geopolitics, internal Jewish dynamics, spiritual trends, external dynamics and to be able to present that to anyone.

In a few sessions, grasp all of Zionism, 4,000 years, in a nutshell.



SCIENCE AND RELIGION IN A NUTSHELL 6 SESSIONS

Increasingly, conventional wisdom declares that there are only two, mutually exclusive choices: Science or Religion. Religion is painted as a persecutor of the Truth, while Galileo, Kepler, Kant, Newton and Darwin fought to free humanity from the shackles of "primitive superstition". This course is an in-depth exploration of the meeting points and flash points between Religion and Science. We examine the foundation of the Scientific Method from Galileo to Godel to Whitehead and Khun, and dive deep into Torah thinkers – from Rashi, Maimonides, Nachmanides and Gersonides, to the Maharal of Prague, Rabbi Hirsch, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rav Soloveitchik and beyond.

Engaging in and reflecting on a world of powerful thinkers and thinking, key questions and challenges are addressed, bringing nuance to the deep divisions between the world of the spirit and the laboratory. Because all beginnings are difficult (*Rashi*) but we are far past the beginning.

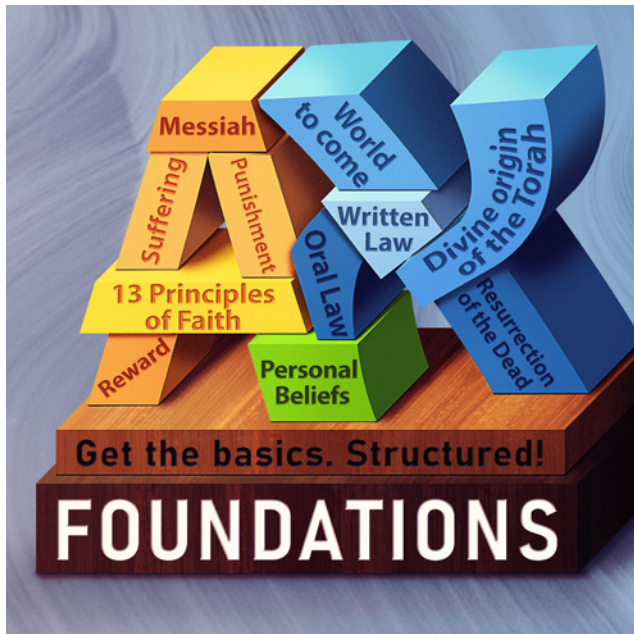


MISHNAH IN A NUTSHELL: ROSH HASHANAH 6 SESSIONS

The Sea of Talmud is majestic, awe-inspiring and one of the greatest works of humankind. But at the same time, even for those who have studied it for years, it is so vast and uncharted, that it is so daunting to set out into it. The Mishnah in a Nutshell Series is the first holistic approach that enables a structured, mapped approach to the backbone of all Oral Law – the *Mishnah*. Each component of *Mishnah* is treated using the same methodology, empowering students for the first time ever to approach these texts with a total grasp of each *masechet* (tractate), using the tools of ancient commentators, the Gemara, as well as modern literary techniques.

Dive into the clear, refreshing waters of life, the *Mishnah*.





FOUNDATIONS | 6 SESSIONS

What are the foundations of Judaism? What does a Jew believe? What is faith and how do I do it?

Join The Academy in examining the idea of belief in Judaism, from principles to philosophies. Together we unpack ideas that have kept us as a people through the ages: the existence of God, the divine origin of the Torah, reward and punishment and the World to Come.

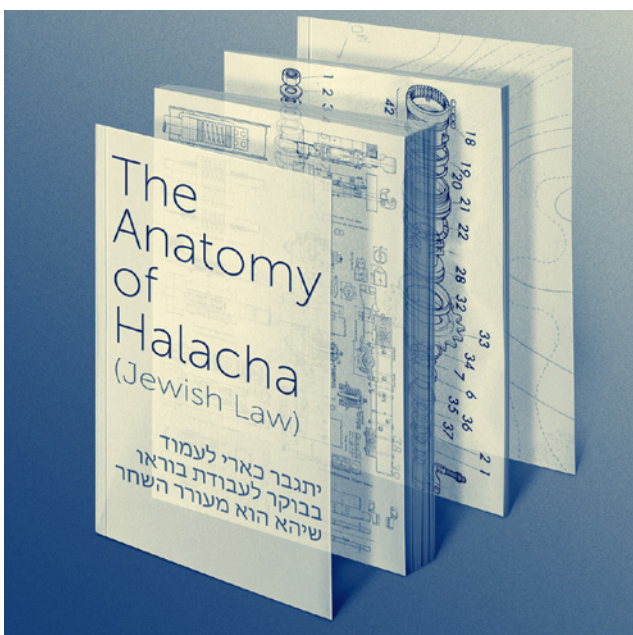


THE SAGES | 5 SESSIONS

"Moshe received the Torah from Sinai, and entrusted it to Yehoshua who bequeathed it to the Sages..." Pirkei Avot 1:1

Led by the incomparable Ezra the Scribe, the spiritual world of the Jewish people was constructed by the most gifted group of spiritual leaders we have ever possessed. We know them as Chazal – Our Sages, of blessed memory. Who were they?

Far from being passive transmitters of tradition, for close on 800 years they were bold and passionate trailblazers who had to contend with powerful political adversaries and difficult internal threats while at the same time nurturing the structure of the Oral Torah as we know it today. Acquire an organic, integrated grasp of the roots of our spiritual heritage where leadership, courage, boldness and humility come together.



THE ANATOMY OF HALACHA (JEWISH LAW) 5 SESSIONS

How does the Halacha (Jewish law) work?

How does a law get from Mount Sinai to today? A five-part journey to unpack the Halachic process as it progresses from Talmudic origins until contemporary times. The course covers the various Halachic works, authorship and methodologies and provides an in-depth analysis of the halachic system. Join The Academy in seeing what is beneath the flow of Halacha, the principles that animate it and gain a deeper understanding of this concept across the ages.





Deeper Dive



Jewish Thought and History



THE RABBI SACKS BOOK CLUB

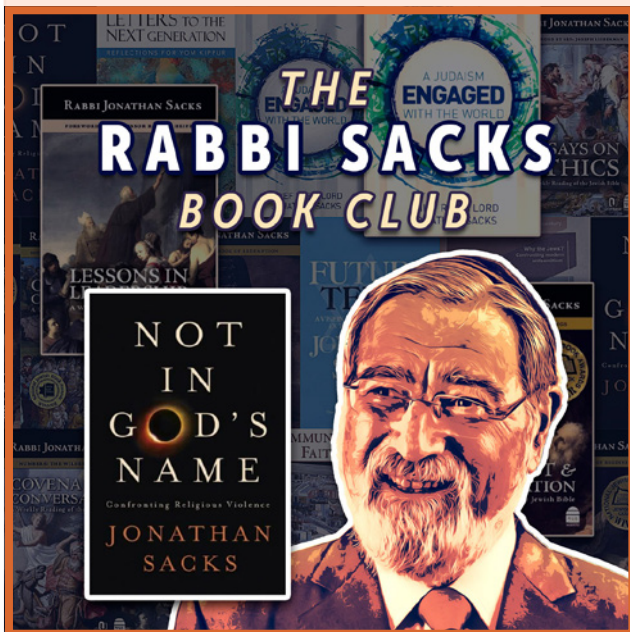
Exploring the books of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks ztz'l

Rabbi Sacks, thinker, philosopher, rabbi and leader, loved books and words, authoring more than 20 during his life. These works, erudite, passionate have inspired and changed lives. In them, Rabbi Sacks' approaches to life, humanity and Judaism are so often radically different from our expectations: they are transformative, counterintuitive and more relevant even years later.

Once a term, The Academy showcased and discussed one of Rabbi Sacks' works, delving into its ideas, many unusual, new or even controversial. Through looking at the themes, students appreciate the power of words, particularly those of one who could be said to be "the master of words."

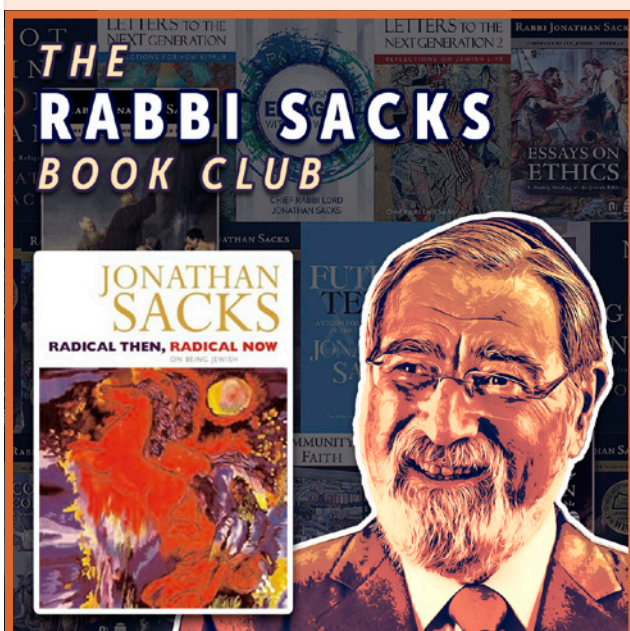
I believe that I am a character in our people's story, with my own chapter to write, and so are we all. To be a Jew is to see yourself as part of that story, to make it live in our time, and to do your best to hand it on to those who will come after us.

– Rabbi Jonathan Sacks ztz'l



NOT IN G-D'S NAME

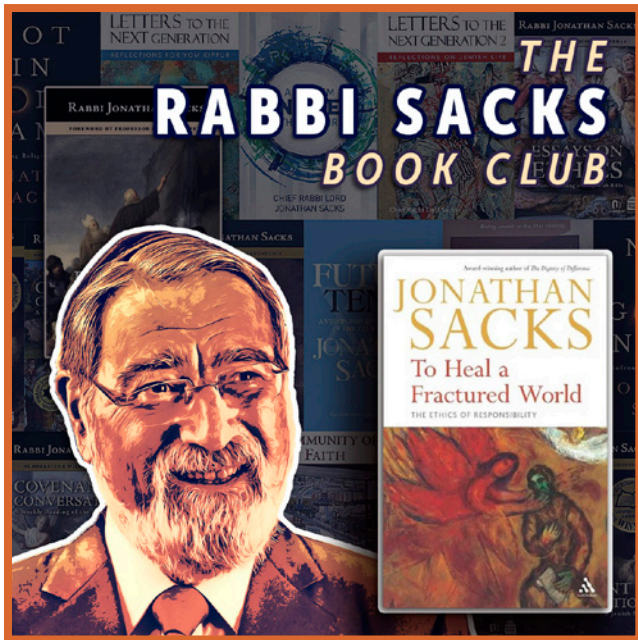
Rabbi Sacks tackles the phenomenon of religious extremism and violence committed in the name of G-d. If religion is perceived as being part of the problem, Rabbi Sacks argues, then it must also form part of the solution. Published in 2015, this book could have been written in October 2023.



RADICAL THEN, RADICAL NOW

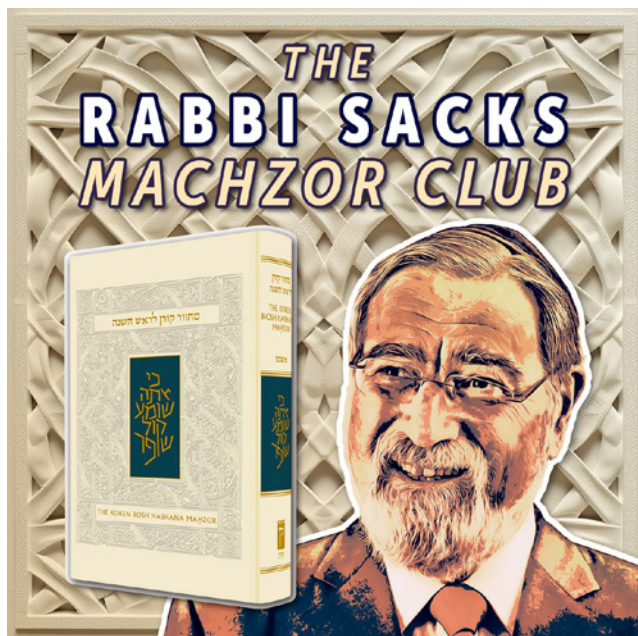
A powerful testimony to the amazing resilience of the Jewish people who have, through their endurance of four thousand years of persecution and exile, earned a unique place in history. Through a journey of self-discovery – his own – Rabbi Sacks reminds us of the legacy we carry and our responsibility to ourselves, our nation, our G-d – and the human race.





TO HEAL A FRACTURED WORLD

Rabbi Sacks explores one of his favourite topics: Judaism's ethics of responsibility. In our post-modern society, the individual's needs seem to come first. But Rabbi Sacks disagrees. In a profound engagement with the human condition today, Rabbi Sacks argues that to be truly human and ethical is to commit to the life we live together, and the goods we share only exist by virtue of being shared.



THE ROSH HASHANA AND YOM KIPPUR PRAYER BOOKS

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur celebrate the creation of the world, the coronation of its Creator and our moment to return to G-d and our true selves. The Machzor – the festival prayer book – is meant to aid us in this quest. Yet, we are often daunted by the prayers, the often-opaque language, and the sheer number of pages of the book before us. How do we connect to the shul service or to the prayers themselves? In response, Rabbi Sacks created a new translation where he expressed the poetry and power of these ancient Hebrew prayers, while his introductions and commentaries brought a whole new meaning to the high holy days.



MAIMONIDES | 6 SESSIONS

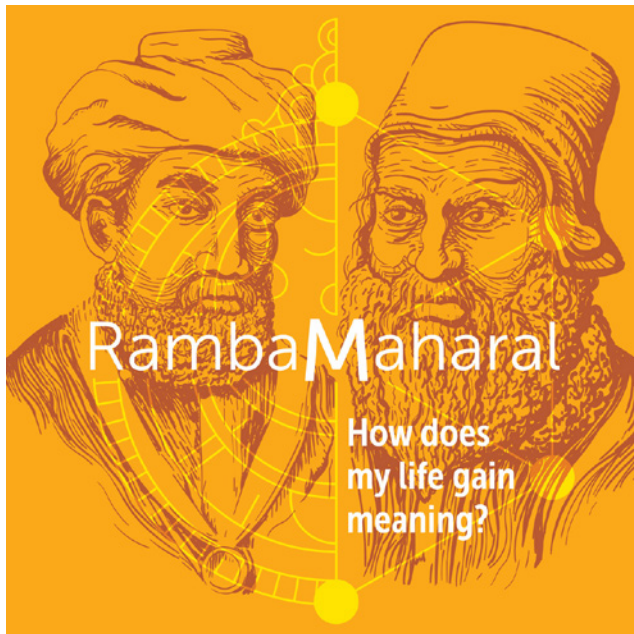
"From Moses to Moses, there was no-one like Moses."

Over the past millennium, one name towers above all others in the world of Torah learning. Ironically, he is also known as philosopher, outstanding physician, and a leader who martialled political and social power to rally Jews worldwide to establish a firm community structure.

The name is Rambam, Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon – Maimonides. We explore the Rambam and discover the mind, soul and Torah of one of the greatest Jews ever to have lived, delve into the historical and political reality of his times and learn the application of his insights into life today on a personal, communal and political level.

Because an examined life is truly worth living.





RAMBAMAHARAL | 6 SESSIONS

The two giants of Jewish Philosophy over the past 1,000 years are the Maharal of Prague and Maimonides (Rambam). Their vastly differing approaches to Jewish thought have framed or driven most of the development of Jewish philosophy during this period. Rambam drew on the world of Aristotelian philosophy, generating fierce resistance from the mainstream sages at the time; yet he claimed consistently that there could never be a real contradiction between Torah and Philosophy. The Maharal went further, weaving science and Kabbalah into a holistic framework which also included classical philosophical ideas. They both engaged with the central questions of human and Jewish existence. This course takes a voyage into life's central questions through the eyes of two of its greatest thinkers and leaders.



IN G-D'S IMAGE | 3 SESSIONS

Creativity in the thought of Rabbi Soloveitchik

Creativity is an elusive mirage, so sought after, but often only found when least sought. Dive into the philosophy of Rabbi Soloveitchik and his approach to creativity - in his mind, the closest we can come to emulating G-d.

Rabbi Soloveitchik is known as a tower of Jewish thought and life in the 20th century – creator of the Orthodox day school system in the US, the leading light of Modern Orthodoxy, combining Torah study as well as worldly education; and the preeminent Talmudist in the 2nd half of the 20th century. He was also the most stunningly original, innovative and creative author on the personality, experience and philosophy of Judaism. Enjoy a transformative journey of introspection and philosophical exploration; to reach, maybe, actualise the image of G-d in each of us.



THE WOMAN IN THE ROOM | 6 SESSIONS

From Sarah to Devorah, Esther to Ruth, Beruriah to Nehama Leibowitz, Jewish women have provided leadership in every vital area of Jewish life: the home, the White House, the school, the heart, the soul, the battlefield and beyond. But with such an emotive topic, we often find ourselves limited by generalisations and assumed historical precedent, and influenced by society and the social mores of our times.

This course examines Jewish female leadership, through the multiple prisms of Tanach, Midrash, history, Jewish philosophy and Halacha, as well as modern theorists. It aims to create a space for men and women to engage authentically with Torah texts and with fellow learners on the contemporary issues of female leadership in the Jewish world.





THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MECHITZA 4 SESSIONS

The word “mechitza” can mean “partition” or “boundary”, denoting in one sense a division, but in another an inclusive space of sanctity and intimacy. Today, the word, “mechitza” refers to the Halachic separation in shul between the women and men’s sides. This course then explores the Jewish Law as it pertains to Jewish women in community life.

We explore a global understanding of some laws of community, such as women leaders, the synagogue, minyan, Torah reading, as well as Torah study. By directly engaging with the halachic texts, honestly and in depth, the aim is to understand the nuances of obligation and exemption of a system to empower everyone, no matter on which side of the mechitza they find themselves, to deepen their relationship with their Creator.



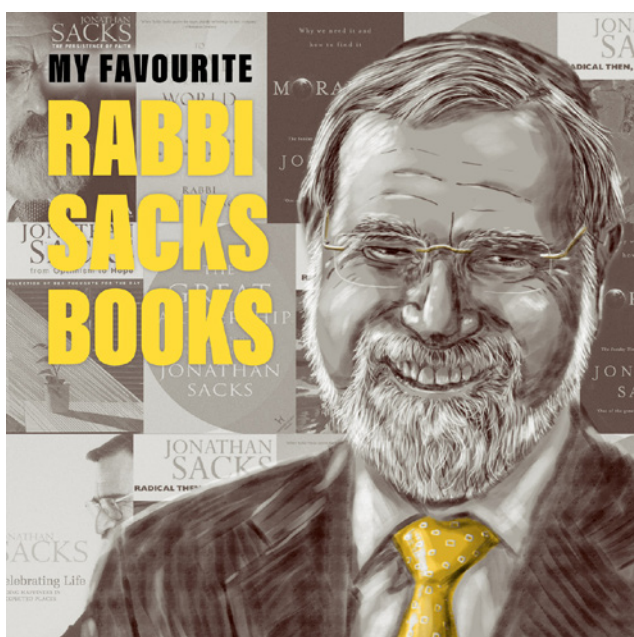
ANATOMY OF MIDRASH | 4 SESSIONS

What does the Midrash *actually* say?

“Terach was a manufacturer of idols ... [Avraham] took a stick and broke them, and put the stick in the hand of the largest...”
“Esther was green and Vashti had a tail...”

These and other unusual tales are not part of the Torah’s text – rather they are often taught as “the Midrash says...” “Midrash” encompasses a body of Oral Torah collected in the Talmud and other works that plumbs the meaning of the text, crafting new narratives and drawing connections between seemingly unrelated words, ideas, events and themes. What is the Midrash? How did it develop? How do we approach a Midrash? And how do we get the most out of this fascinating methodology? These and other questions are answered in this fascinating course.

Because with Midrash, the sting is often in the tale.



MY FAVOURITE RABBI SACKS BOOKS 4 SESSIONS

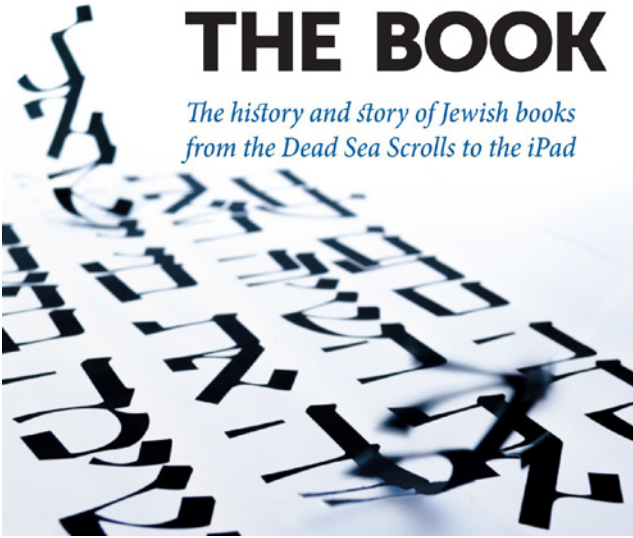
When the Jewish people and the world lost Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z”l, it lost a storyteller and spokesperson par excellence, a leader and a voice, a philosopher and a thinker. But thankfully, his words were immortalised within his many books and writings – thoughts that showed that Torah approaches to life were so often radically different from our expectations: they are transformative, counterintuitive and more relevant than many “modern” ideas.

Since his passing, many have reflected nostalgically on that favourite idea or book that was truly transformative. The Academy faculty and friends discuss some of our favourite Rabbi Sacks works – a personal and communal journey into his thought, words and books, where we showcase some of his most powerful ideas and his impact. We also pay tribute to him as a person whose ideas and support were key factors in the creation of the Academy itself.



PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

The history and story of Jewish books from the Dead Sea Scrolls to the iPad



PEOPLE OF THE BOOK | 3 SESSIONS

Jews have always had an intimate relationship with books: We are taught that the Torah was the marriage document between Jews and G-d. But how did our books reach us? The texts that form the central body of Judaism have storied biographies of their own that are as fascinating and varied as the Jewish people themselves. The Jewish people's struggle for its books is a wondrous journey spanning continents and centuries. Scribes, printers and ordinary women and men sought to transmit precious truths against almost overwhelming odds. They were powered by the belief that the pen is always mightier than the sword, and that G-d's pen is mightiest of all. They ensured that we remained the beneficiaries of the collective wisdom of the Jewish people. They sustained our title – 'The People of the Book.'

A TALE OF TWO EZRAS

"When the Lord returns the returnees to Zion, we shall be like dreamers"
Psalms 126:1



A TALE OF TWO EZRAS | 5 SESSIONS

"When the Lord returns the returnees to Zion, we shall be like dreamers" (Psalms 126:1)

The book of Ezra-Nehemiah is the Biblical record of the Jews' return from Babylon to Jerusalem, while Iraqi Jews returned to the modern State of Israel in Operation Ezra & Nehemiah in the 20th century. The culture and society of Iraqi Jews was one of the most venerable, passionate, rich and integrated in the Jewish world. But then it all came apart in an explosion of antisemitism, and most left for the Holy Land. Sarah Sassoon and guests explore both these incredible stories, their historical context, the journey of return to a nascent state and the emotional and spiritual quest and struggles both faced.

Two different yet similar tales – yet both ask: What happens when the dream becomes real?

Judaism & Jordan B. Peterson



JUDAISM & JORDAN B. PETERSON 3 SESSIONS

Exploring transformative ideas of Jordan Peterson in the light of Torah.

Jordan B. Peterson shot to world prominence amongst significant controversy, but at the same time, he garnered a worldwide following of people who appreciated a profound scholar of religion, religious history and the complex interplay between theology, morals, politics and more. Amongst others, his series on the psychological significance of the book of B'reishit (Genesis) is challenging, thought-provoking and eye-opening, stepping boldly into Torah and asking important questions.

Jake Shepherd and Rav Ramon Widmonte dive into some of Jordan Peterson's most transformative ideas in the light of Torah; because we all look at the world through stories, we cannot help it – and perhaps the story we tell ourselves should not be: "We're okay the way we are," but rather: "we could be so much more."





JUDAISM AND HARARI | 3 SESSIONS

Yuval Noah Harari grabbed readers' attention worldwide by shechting some very sacred cows – from human rights to happiness, his blend of history, futurism and startling intellect has garnered a worldwide following. Through his works such as *Sapiens*, *Homo Deus* and *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*, Harari on the one hand seems to challenge what many (including himself) consider to be cardinal tenets of Jewish thought; on the other, perhaps these ideas are in fact deeply rooted in Jewish thinking beyond his view.

Take a deep dive into some of Harari's most transformative ideas in the light of Torah: human rights, myths, dataism and the inevitable evolution of *Homo sapiens*.

Because questions you cannot answer are usually far better for you than answers you cannot question.



CHANGING THE SCRIPT | 3 SESSIONS

The story of the Hebrew alphabet

The Torah's script is solid, bold, square, and familiar to us even if we can't read it. However, the original Hebrew alphabet, known as *ketav Ivri* (Hebrew script), was changed to *ketav Ashurit* (Assyrian script). What is the history behind and the geopolitical context of the primordial alphabet – indeed of all writing? What did it look like and how was it used in biblical times? How did *ketav Ashurit* come to be and importantly, how did a religion so firmly rooted in its traditions allow such a change?

Meet the changemaker – Ezra the Scribe – and delve into the history and halacha of the writing in the Scroll. Because no other language has seen such a transformation – where an entire alphabet changed, survived, to be reborn.



NUCLEAR WAR? | 3 SESSIONS

"... The hand of Hashem came upon me, and ... set me down in the midst of the valley, and that was full of bones... and they were exceedingly dry." Yechezkel 37:1-2

How did we get here? Since the '80s we've been assured that nuclear war is a vanishing prospect, with John Lennon and others opining that it is religion that is the cause of all strife – if we could only imagine an alternative. Yet in eight quick months in 2022, a regional conflict in Ukraine seemingly brought us much closer to Nuclear War.

The Torah is the earliest human record of deep and detailed reflection at every level on the concept of war, its boundaries and impact. Take a journey through Jewish thought, kabbalah and law, exploring the concepts from roots up.





BITCOIN AND BIBLE – A JEWISH DEEP DIVE 4 SESSIONS

A journey with explorers of Bitcoin and Spirituality

If history could teach us anything, it would be that private property is inextricably linked with civilisation.

- Ludwig von Mises

No, this is not a course trying to convince you to buy Bitcoin. It is an absorbing journey into a world most of us only see in the headlines: What makes money, money? Why is Bitcoin a thing (for beginners)? Does Judaism see a link between monetary systems and the way humans view themselves as ethical agents? These are some of the questions which, believe it or not, are core to the people who built Bitcoin and there are some fascinating parallels between Bitcoin's genesis and structure and Jewish spiritual concepts. The Academy with Amnon Melzer, David Rabinowitz and Rabbi Ramon Widmonte take a journey into two parallel universes: Bitcoin and Judaism.





Zionism and Israel



VISIONARIES

2 PARTS OF 4 AND 5 SESSIONS EACH

"Dream and deed are not as different as many think. All the deeds of men are dreams at first, and become dreams in the end." Theodor Herzl

Over 100 years ago, most Jews lived in Europe. Today, for the first time in 2,000 years or more, the largest Jewish population resides in the Land of Israel. How did this happen? We explore the writings and lives of the Visionaries of Modern Zionism by diving into the passion, rationale, rhetoric, despair and hope of Hess, Pinsker, Herzl, Nordau, Zangwill, Jabotinsky, Gordon and Rabbi Kook – each appealing to a different part of the Jewish world, each a visionary whose sight telescoped beyond the ordinary and reached so far into our own future.

For only if we know the dreams of the past can we learn how much further we ourselves could learn to see.



1948 | 4 SESSIONS

"We have no alternative." – Golda Meir

The State of Israel was almost destroyed before it began. The reality of pre-State existence was exceptionally hard to navigate with Jews being without an army, arms, political statehood and even food! The Academy explores the effects of the UN partition plan, navigates pre-1948 independence and tackles the issues which David Ben Gurion, Golda Meir, Menachem Begin and other leaders faced in the creation of the State of Israel. Witness the indomitable will to return to the Holy Land and build a Jewish sovereign state for the first time in 2,000 years to provide a physical and spiritual haven for Jews. Won with tears, blood, sweat and prayers; the State of Israel, is a miracle. Explore its birth with the Academy.



SIX DAYS IN JUNE | 5 SESSIONS

"The temple mount is in our hands!" – Motta Gur

For 2,000 years Jews had yearned for home. Every Pesach Seder, every Yom Kippur service had ended on the poignant note, sung with joy, sung with pathos and perhaps with a question mark at its end, *"Leshanah haba'ah biyrushalayim"* – Next year in Jerusalem?

Then, in six days, June 1967, the part of the city where battles have been waged for millennia, finally returned, undivided, to become the eternal capital of the State of Israel. From the collective personal experience of the paratroopers who stormed the Old City, to the relief experienced of a return, once again to the holy site of the Kotel, the miraculous story of the Six Day War engages us in its energy, precision and wonder. Today's open and undivided Jerusalem seems natural but to a recent generation the battle was fought daily and collectively so that Jerusalem is now open to all peoples and religions.





HERZL – MADMAN OR VISIONARY? 2 SESSIONS

In eight brief years, one man dedicated every ounce of his energies, talents, networks, family, wealth and health to establishing a modern, Jewish State. His contemporaries differed radically in their evaluation of him. Some felt he was a religious rebel, others felt he was simply sane. Only a small portion of the Jewish people felt that he was a visionary, leading the beginning of an international revolution in Jewish affairs.

Over one hundred years later, history and providence have had their say.



THE JEWISH STATE 1.0 | 4 SESSIONS

On May 14th, 1948, the State of Israel was declared – the first independent Jewish State in 2,000 years. What compass did its first leader, David Ben Gurion, use? What map did he follow in charting the course of the State? It was the Tanach, the Bible, for he knew that within the Tanach lie the patterns and paradigms of nationhood, the Middle East, the thirst for power and dominance that are the staples of states. As Ben Gurion wrote, “Ever since I came to the land, I was shaped primarily by the Tanach, since only here on the land, could I begin to grasp its depth and it has shaped me more than any other book...”

For anyone interested in the State of Israel, and who seeks a wider and longer view of the issues of the Middle East, this course is a must.



THE MARVEL OF BALFOUR | 3 SESSIONS

The Balfour Declaration viewed “with favour the establishment ... of a national home for the Jewish people.” How did this remarkable revolution occur? How did a wandering journalist create a powerful political machine in a mere seven years? How did the cogs of history mesh for a brief moment, prompting the world’s powers to sanction the creation of a Jewish State? Why were so many Jewish leaders opposed to the declaration and how did it come to be? Journey into one of the most unlikely events in modern history – the recreation of the Jewish State after centuries of silence. Page through recently released documentation and sail the seas of international intrigue and avarice; grasp its impact on Jews and Arabs alike and meet the heroes of Jewish history who made it possible. Because an event (and course) like this only happens once every 2,000 years....



Must a Jew believe in Israel

120 years ago, in one of the first times in Jewish history, Jews began asking themselves, "Must a Jew believe in Israel?" And then, why must a Jew believe in Israel, or why not? What is "Israel" – is it a country, a state of mind, a spiritual concept, a mitzvah (commandment) or a flesh and blood state? If it is a state, is it secular or religious, or something in between? These were the spiritual and cultural questions which undergirded the creation of Zionism – all based on a core Jewish idea, left undefined for thousands of years – that Israel was a mother, and we, errant children, on the verge of returning to her.

THE PRIME MINISTERS | 8 SESSIONS

Look over Ben Gurion's shoulder as he reads the proclamation of independence, sweat with Levi Eshkol as he faces down Egypt, tremble with Golda Meir as the Syrian tanks smash through the Golan, mourn with a nation at Yitzhak Rabin's grave, rejoice as Menachem Begin shakes hands with Anwar Sadat, hold fire with white-knuckled Yitzhak Shamir as Scud missiles fall on Tel Aviv, hold the nation together with Ariel Sharon on the edge of civil war and hug Gilad Shalit with Benjamin Netanyahu

Each Prime Minister had highs and lows, each heavily criticised and wildly praised. Their stories mirror, for the large part, the passionate epic of the Jewish people since the dark days of the Holocaust, and understanding their decisions and wisdom leads us all to a better grasp of the State of Israel, the Middle East and the future of the Jewish people.

Explore the power of symbols to communicate, considering examples from all over the world and in different areas of life – religion, nationhood, society, universal language and more; as we delve into religious, cultural, linguistic and lyrical symbols through the ages.

Because these signs are sealed in our flesh, our soul and our aspirations.



Signs, Symbols and Songs



10 TRUTHS | 20 SESSIONS

Too often, Israel is presented as a simplistic, black and white issue.

Too often, Israel is framed purely in terms of conflict.

Too often, we lack the balanced space to think and discuss, to reflect and hear.

If you feel this way too often, and are passionate about Israel, 10 Truths is for you.

The world's first collaborative space for high school students who would like to develop critical thinking skills; online critical awareness; conflict management EQ; and a solid, balanced, long-view of Israel.

Rav Ramon Widmonte takes our youth on this paradigm-shifting journey.

Because sometimes, things aren't black and white.



HATIKVAH | 2 SESSIONS

Our Anthem, Our Song and Our Hope

Learn the powerful story of the development of the anthem and its music, its heroes and villains! Join The Academy for a two-part course on Hatikvah, our anthem, our song; from history to music to controversy – to hope.



BRAVE NEW MIDDLE EAST | 4 SESSIONS

In 1917, the cogs of history meshed for a brief moment, prompting the world's powers to sanction the creation of a "Jewish National Home". The Balfour Declaration opened a new era in Jewish and Zionist history. In 2020, another era began: The Abraham Accords. Take a four-session odyssey into one of the most unlikely series of events in modern history – the recreation of the Jewish State after 2,000 years of silence and its birth into a Middle East of ill-assorted countries each at war with each other and with the Jews. Page through recently-released documentation and sail the seas of international intrigue and avarice; grasp its impact on Jews and Arabs alike and meet the heroes of Jewish history who made it possible. Examine with us the unlikely nature of the Abraham Accords as well as its inevitability.

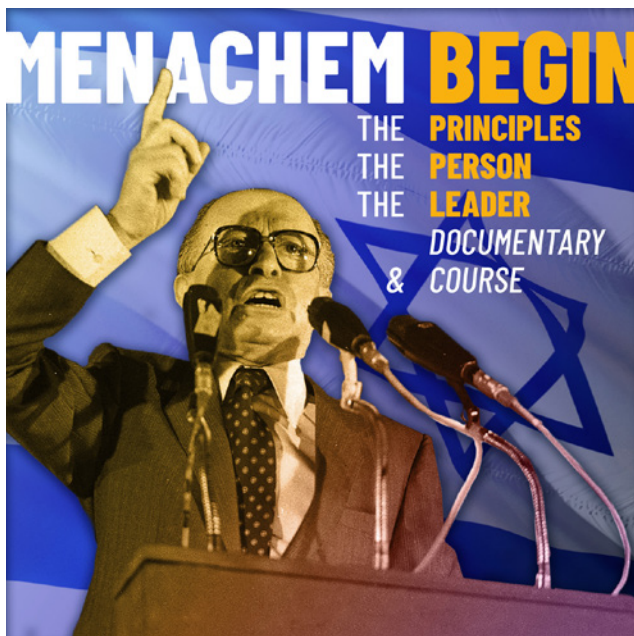
Because it's a Brave New World out there.





BIBI – KING OF ISRAEL? | 3 SESSIONS

Benjamin Netanyahu is the longest serving Israeli Prime Minister. He has served his country at the highest levels militarily, diplomatically and politically. He has also been the architect of "Peace for Peace" – breaking the decades-long Arab blockade of normalisation with Israel in a vindication of the principles of Ze'ev Jabotinsky. On the other hand, he has been dogged by allegations of corruption and abuse of power; and a growing wave of opposition in many spheres over the past five years. We explore the depths of this public figure who is also a guarded, private person. Play political and strategic chess with one of Israel's most cunning warriors, both on and off the battlefield and confront the question – is Bibi, indeed, the king?

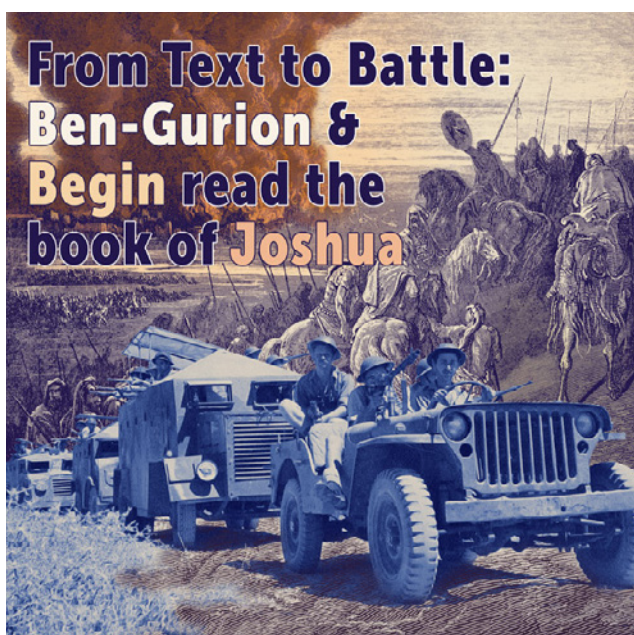


MENACHEM BEGIN – THE PRINCIPLES, THE PERSON, THE LEADER

"Jews! Brothers! Fighters!"

He was called a terrorist; he sat in KGB jail; he carried out the world's first bombing of a nuclear reactor against massive international opposition; he made peace. Few Jewish leaders have assembled so many contradictory sides in themselves: peacemaker, underground fighter, saviour of boat-people, opposition leader, traditional Jew, liberal democrat, human rights advocate, champion of greater Israel, lover of all Jews, G-d-fearing, law-obsessed, ideologue, compromiser.

Together with our partners, the Hidden Light, The Academy presented the first-ever documentary made on the life and leadership of Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, followed by an in-depth course on the man and the leader – an immersion into the world of Menachem Begin and a set of learnings for Jews in the 21st century.



FROM TEXT TO BATTLE: BEN-GURION AND BEGIN READ JOSHUA | 5 SESSIONS

David Ben-Gurion and Menachem Begin were two early Zionist leaders who helped create a sovereign state out of an exiled people and its long-remembered land. What few people know is how much the ancient texts of the Bible figured in their own dreams, in the practical realities of creating a state and the strategies of the battles it fought to survive. Within the roots of secular and revisionist Zionism stands the Bible.

Explore the stories and leaders of the prophetic books of Joshua and Judges and how these affected the thought and beliefs of Ben-Gurion and Begin, how they used these as a source of cultural memory and inspiration to make the dream a reality.

Because to understand the roots of secular Zionism, you need to know your Bible.





FIND YOUR VOICE!

*Understanding and Practical Tools for Communication
- Gaza & Hamas*

As we slowly emerged from the shock and horror of the Simchat Torah terrorist attack on innocent civilians in Israel, we found ourselves needing knowledge and tools for education (to those close to us) and communication (with interested people around us).

This two-part series explores a new paradigm for tackling the relevant issues. Additionally, participants receive a core info booklet as well as social media tools.

*"In a place where there is no-one; be someone!"
(Pirkei Avot 2:5)*



ISRAEL MASTERCOURSE

"Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends, than that good men should look on and do nothing." ~ John Stuart Mill

Do you feel besieged on Israel?

Do you wish you had the knowledge and skills you need to engage in the ways you feel you could?

Do you wish you had a grasp of the big picture as well as the details on Israel?

Do you wish to understand the other side's narratives?

Too often, we lack the balanced space to think and discuss, to reflect and hear. This has never been more clear than in the months after October 7. The Academy has created the world's first collaborative space to develop critical thinking skills; high-level as well as granular knowledge on Israel; online critical awareness; exposure to all sides and narratives; skills to educate, communicate and engage in adversarial communication.

Because silence is not an option.





Torah and Tanach

THE MOST DARING BOOK EVER WRITTEN



TANACH IN A YEAR | 27 SESSIONS

Would you dare open it? Few books may be said to be truly great, even fewer regarded as dangerous. For millennia, the Tanach (Hebrew Bible) has stirred debate, dissension, war, love, cruelty and hope. Men and women have gone to their deaths with its words on their lips, while believers have struggled through all adversity because of its meaning. Poets have marvelled at its passionate and sensual images; scholars have been left in awe by the scope of its tales; while ordinary individuals have found comfort and courage in its bare, honest accounts of tragedy and restoration. Is it any wonder that it has been called "The Book of Books?" This ground-breaking course, originally from the London School of Jewish Studies is a world first. It presents a unique opportunity to explore the ultimate Jewish text in all of its glory and grit and discover for yourself what it is really trying to say and what meaning it has for the modern world. Cover the entire Tanach in 27 weeks and gain insight into its central themes and messages. Learn the history, marvel at the imagery and explore its understanding of G-d, humanity and this world. Because a book this daring deserves to be read.





BREISHIT – HANDBOOK FOR HUMANITY 4 SESSIONS

For many of us, Breishit (Genesis) is a book of talking snakes, sudden floods and babbling towers, ideas we relegate to the realm of children's stories. But that is not its true legacy. Sometimes just one line of Genesis has been enough to overturn centuries of tyranny; it is indeed the Handbook for Humanity. How do we reconcile our perception of morality and Hashem's? What is the perfect balance between individual rights and duties, on the one hand, and social cohesion on the other? What is moral leadership? These are just some of the questions that Breishit poses and that we will consider, including delving into how Breishit in fact is a coherent and comprehensive dialogue on how all human beings should live as creative individuals in society, and how we can build sustainable and productive communities.



JOSHUA IN DEPTH | 6 SESSIONS

The book of Yehoshua (Joshua) is the sequel to the Torah, charting the beginning of the Jewish nation's attempt to forge a State in the Holy Land and the challenges they encounter. It is a book that looks at the realisation of the vision of the Torah, and the beginning of 'real life' in a real land with all its complexity. How will they balance their faith in G-d with a normal life of working the land? Will the Holy Land be Holy or just another country? This journey through the book of Yehoshua is an exploration of the people and places of our past – of the reality versus the dream. It is the end of the beginning.



SHOFTIM – BOOK OF JUDGES | 6 SESSIONS

How does one lead the Jewish people? 'With difficulty' is probably the most apt answer. The book of Shoftim (Judges) is the exploration of the Jewish people's first steps at autonomous rule and at finding leaders to help them build their first state.

From their entry into the land under Yehoshua until the last of the Judges, the Jewish people faced many challenges: internal divides, spiritual temptations, external and internal political threats, a non-existent economy and a dearth of strong mechanisms of government. Onto this stage were thrust the men and women who struggled to hold it all together, remain faithful to Hashem and to the nation and to their own consciences. This course discovers the iconic leaders of the Jewish people in the chaotic first period of self-rule in the land of Israel.





ESTHER IN DEPTH | 4 SESSIONS

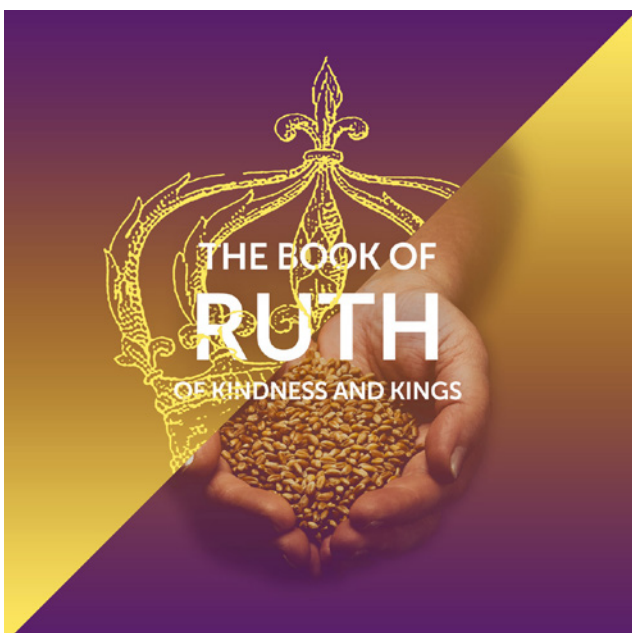
In the depths of a den of political intrigue, caught in a web of deceit, violence and anti-Semitism, a young orphan must find her way. Torn between the warm refuge of traditional Torah values and the harsh demands of saving her people, a masked heroine is born. But who is she, behind the veils? As Esther builds her own facades and mirages, what remains of innocence? This course explores the dramatic irony of the story and the presentation of female Torah leadership as well as an examination of the power plays behind each step. We weave our way through the pages of the Megillah of Esther, and navigate the hallways of the Persian Court to uncover the Tanach's powerful presentation of life, greatness and survival in the Exile. Reflect on the literary value and the unique power that made Esther one of the greatest Jewish heroines.



SHIR HASHIRIM IN DEPTH | 3 SESSIONS

"Let him lead me to the banquet hall, and let his banner over me be love." – Shir HaShirim, 2:4

Shir HaShirim (Song of Songs) is traditionally read on Chol Hamo'ed Pesach. It has been called a love song, a poem and the Holy of Holies. Its evocative, sensual language calls for readings on multiple levels, through which a deeper understanding of the nature of love, both divine and mortal can be reached. This course brings the story of the Song of Songs to life and finds its inherent connection to Pesach. The allegorical dimensions of the book are unpacked in a way that is relatable and down to earth, and will include teachings of the greatest Tanach scholars of our generation. Over three sessions, we analyse and shed light on the challenge of confronting the unfathomable Otherness of the Divine, while attempting to cultivate a human relationship with G-d.



RUTH IN DEPTH | 5 SESSIONS

What has built Jewish society into so robust, adaptable and dynamic a force throughout all history and geography? Moreover, how have we retained, nourished and developed our Torah and values against all odds? In this vein, the book of Ruth seems to be an anomaly in the Tanach. Why would G-d choose this most unlikely pair – Naomi and Ruth – as role-models and then celebrate their seemingly small lives every Shavuot? Indeed, it is the book of Ruth which lays the foundation for all Jewish Society, a Jewish State and the Jewish Monarchy. Arguing against theories of State, it posits a theory of society – a way of constructing larger communal and political structures from the bottom up. This book explores the greatness latent in the smallest acts of kindness, the power of women and the true strength of a Kingdom.





EICHA IN DEPTH | 4 SESSIONS

"Oh, how has the city that was once so populous remained lonely! She has become like a widow..."

The Book of Lamentations (Eicha) is renowned as a heart-rending elegy to the destruction of Jerusalem, the first Temple and the loss of Jewish sovereignty at the hands of the Babylonian conquerors. But is it possible to find comfort in the scroll of Eicha? In this course, we examine the poetry, passion, and purpose of the book of Eicha. Using the commentaries and thinkers from the Midrash to Rashi to Dr Yael Ziegler, the themes of famine, false prophets, and the quest for G-d are examined.



KOHELET IN DEPTH | 4 SESSIONS

The search for meaning is a definitive human experience. We all ask at some point, "What is our purpose in the world? Is there rhyme and reason in our existence, or is it all just random chaos?" These are questions that philosophers and scholars have grappled with through the ages, but first was Kohelet (Ecclesiastes), the crucible of King Solomon. The book of Kohelet asks if everything is indeed Hevel – futility, embarking on a journey of earnest questioning of every Jewish value. We delve into the text, examining the unique literary features of Kohelet, and exploring the elements of Kohelet that concerned our Rabbinic sages. Finally, we explore the eternal meaning of Kohelet that ultimately earned it a place in the Biblical canon, and a regular annual reading in Ashkenazi shuls on Sukkot.

Because an examined life is very much worth living.



YONAH – COMPLEXITY BENEATH THE SURFACE 4 SESSIONS

The book of Jonah, to quote Churchill, is "a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma." Its simplicity belies the complexity that lies just beneath the surface. Filled with questions, its characters - human, animal and plant - are fascinating, and some frankly fanciful. A prophet who fights his destiny, an evil city that makes good... and a big fish. Yet, not only is it part of the Jewish canon, but part of the service on the holiest day of the year – Yom Kippur. This course takes a textual, national and spiritual voyage 20,000 leagues into the murky depths as we delve into its language and concepts and discover the value of return, reinvigoration, repentance and revolution encapsulated in the belly of this powerful book.

Because the voyage can be more powerful than the destination!





EZRA-NECHEMIAH IN DEPTH | 5 SESSIONS

The Jews have displayed remarkable resilience throughout centuries of dispersion and persecution. But perhaps even more remarkable is our capacity to regenerate and rebirth ourselves out of the ashes. The book of Ezra-Nechemiah is our Biblical record of this time period, recording the return of the exiled Judeans to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the second Temple, society and their relationship with G-d. We explore the hopes, struggles, triumphs and disappointments of the Jewish people as they rebuild their home, their Temple and their shattered Jewish identity 2500 years ago – and discover the resonance of the same themes in the 20th century rebuilding of the modern State of Israel.

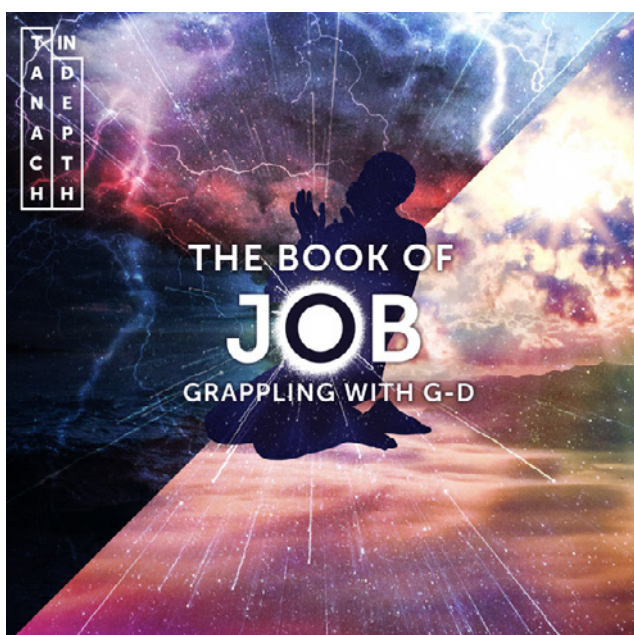


TEHILLIM – POWER IN POETRY | 4 SESSIONS

A song of David. The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
— Psalm 23

A song for ascents. I shall raise my eyes to the mountains, from where will my help come? — Psalm 121

The book of Tehillim is seen as a book of poetry. More it is also a keyhole through which we peek into the life of King David, the shepherd, the warrior, and the king. It is a book which brings comfort and at the same time has the capacity to elevate the soul. As such, it is one that we reach for when we feel troubled, alone, powerless. It is a book that reaches beyond poetry into the power of prayer and connection. Who wrote these words with such passion and pathos? What is the book about and does it truly “help” us when we seek to tap into the connection between human and G-d? Take a journey of words and music in uncovering the power behind the poetry.



JOB – GRAPPLING WITH G-D 4 SESSIONS

Then the Lord replied to Job out of the tempest and said... “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundations? ...Which path leads to where light dwells, and where is the place of darkness... (Job 38)

The Book of Job is famed as a tale of tremendous suffering and the centre of Biblical Theodicy, asking the question, “How can G-d allow bad things to happen to good people?” It’s a topic that (unfortunately) keeps coming up, and yet the book itself is rarely studied! Difficulties include the demanding Hebrew, unusual narrative/philosophical structure, and the challenges of translating Biblical Philosophy into modern terms.

This course takes a thought-provoking, questioning journey through the book, attempting to understand the structure, themes, story itself – and along the way, the answers it offers us to this most challenging of questions.





POWER & PERSUASION 2 PARTS OF 4 SESSIONS EACH

An exploration of women's voice and silence in Tanach

This fascinating and challenging course took on new relevance after October 7, 2023, when the crimes against Jewish women were met with silence, their voices unheard. Thousands of years ago, the Tanach, on the other hand, gave a sound to the silence. In the days where women had no voice, this book gave them one, telling their stories so that they would not be forgotten, and their messages would be heard.

Take an in-depth look at women's voices, power and powerlessness in the Tanach, through stories that are often glossed over due to their explicit or unusual nature. Explore the text and silences of the text around Dina, Tamar, Batsheva, Esther and others, in order to understand how they used or were used, gained or lost their voices and thus their power. The results often changed the course of Jewish history.

JOSEPH



Will any dream do? A psychological journey

JOSEF – WILL ANY DREAM DO? | 3 SESSIONS

I closed my eyes, drew back the curtain

To see for certain what I thought I knew

Far far away, someone was weeping

But the world was sleeping

Any dream will do

(Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat)

What was the real story of Joseph? How technicoloured was his coat and did he dance to Andrew Lloyd Webber? Or are there more nefarious doings behind the scenes? Why were the brothers jealous? Why didn't Joseph write home?

Dr Yardena Bauer looks at the fascinating character of Joseph, the first court Jew, diving into the neuroscience and psychology that motivated him and those around him. Through their dreams, actions and motives, both conscious and subconscious, they changed the history of the Children of Israel.

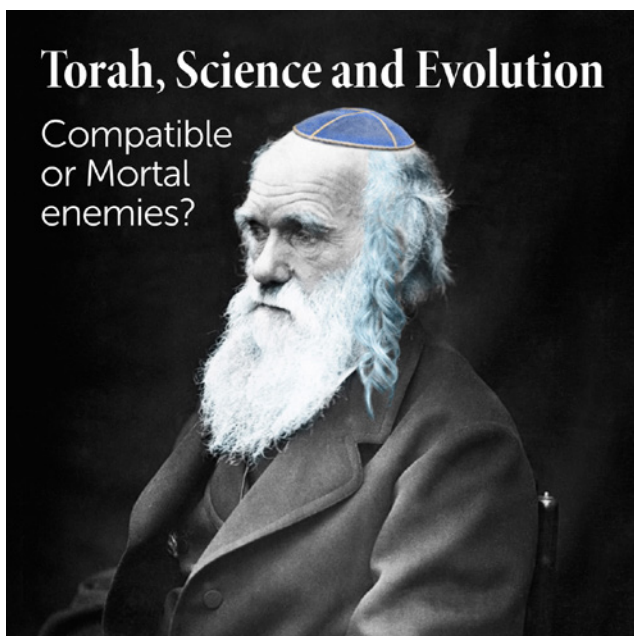






EVOLUTION | 4 SESSIONS

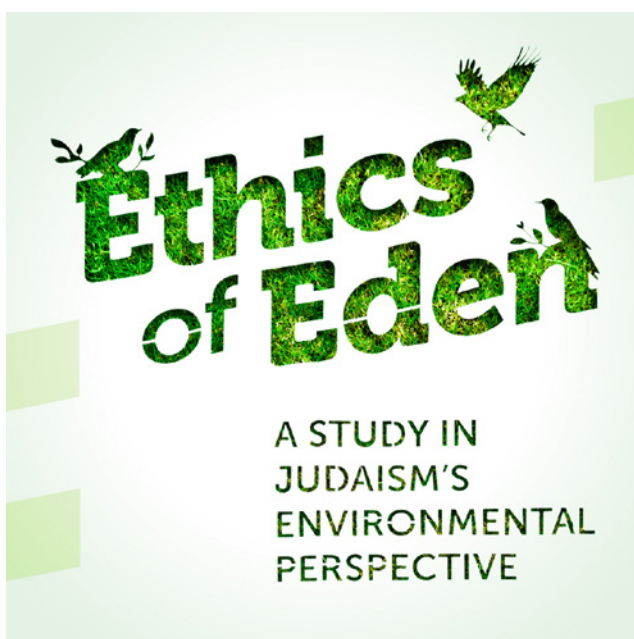
Just over 150 years ago Charles Darwin published the *Origin of Species*, a book destined to have a profound effect on human thought. For many, Darwin became a hero of vision, reason and intellectual courage; but to others he was a dangerous, rebellious heretic. No other branch of science has been more used to challenge religion than the theory of evolution. No other branch of science is viewed with more suspicion and mistrust than evolution. And yet, evolutionary science is now the foundation of biology and its concepts are fundamental to all branches of the sciences of living organisms, including medical science. Is Darwinian evolution still a forbidden black box to the religious person? Or, the opposite, can evolution enhance one's faith in Hashem?



TORAH, SCIENCE AND EVOLUTION 3 SESSIONS

From antiquity, the Jewish people has produced scientists, doctors, astronomers, chemists, alchemists, mathematicians, physicists and biologists. Many of them, combined their scientific pursuits with a deep faith; some of them, such as Gersonides and Maimonides, were Torah sages of the highest calibre. How has Jewish thought approached the evolving world of natural science over the past 1500 years? How has it confronted the challenges posed by changing views of the solar system, the universe, biology and evolutionary theory? What are the key approaches within Torah thought to all this and more? We delve into the twin handmaidens of monotheistic demythification and scientific evolution.

Because a course like this only comes around once an aeon.



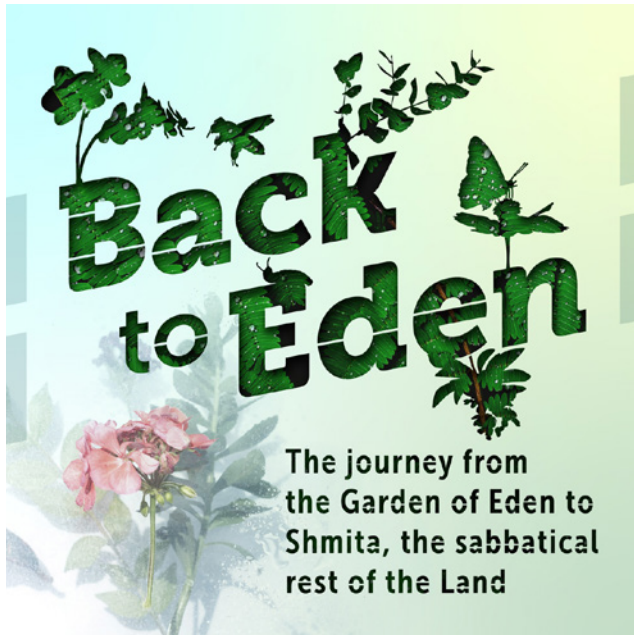
ETHICS OF EDEN | 6 SESSIONS

"The Lord G-d, took the human being and placed him in the Garden of Eden, to work it and protect it." – Genesis 2:15

G-d entrusted the Earth to humankind. But every gift carries with it a responsibility of care. Born into this world, humanity has learned to rule over all other life with almost complete dominance. Nature has served to enable the pursuits of the human species: whether supplying us with parchment and paper to record magnificent poetry or with fuel for rockets carrying our most ambitious dreams. Nature has given and the human being has achieved. But is this exploitation sustainable or ideal?

Ilana Stein, environmental conservationist and master Torah teacher, explores the Jewish attitude to our natural environment. Utilising the guidance of Rabbi J.B. Soloveitchik, Maimonides and modern scholars, the six-part series unpacks how we are to relate to nature's incomprehensible beauty, animal welfare, nature conservation and our metaphysical roots as beings who emerged from the Earth.



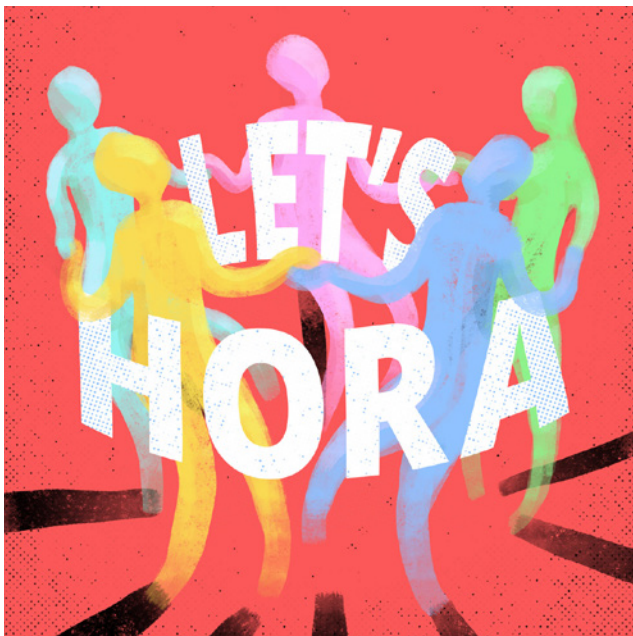


BACK TO EDEN | 4 SESSIONS

The journey from the Garden of Eden to Shmita, the sabbatical rest of the Land

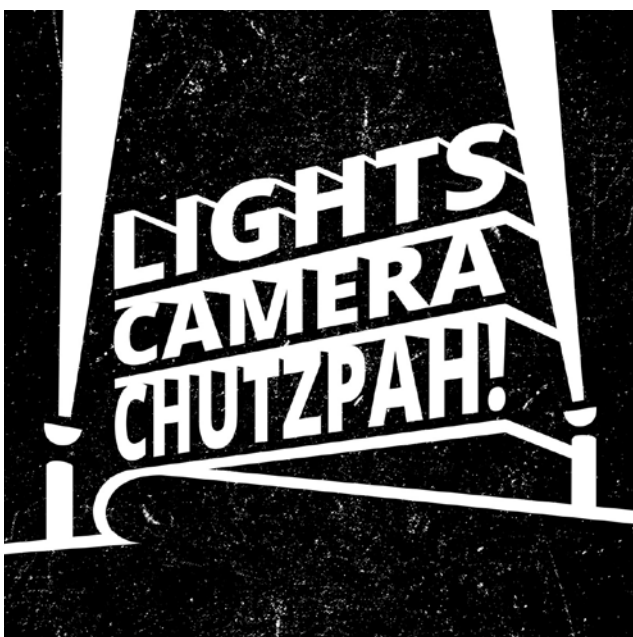
Our journey as human beings began in the Garden of Eden. What does our past as Adam and Eve represent, and how do we get back there to repair our relationships with our Creator, our Earth and our true selves?

Conservationist Ilana Stein takes us through the Torah's first stories, through the Jewish attitude to the planet and its creatures, and delves into the essence of how Shmita – the sabbatical rest of the Land of Israel – is part of how we can get back to Eden. Through the verses, the commands and the philosophies, we seek to understand Shmita and its connection to our relationship with humanity, the Earth and G-d.



LET'S HORA | 2 SESSIONS

The Hora is a staple of Jewish celebrations world-wide, from secular kibbutzim to Chasidic weddings, some form of this dance has made its way into the minds of Jews of all stripes. But where did it originate? What did it mean then to those who first began dancing it? And how did it evolve over time into its various forms? This two-part journey into the Hora looks into the theory and history, with the second session being a practical women's dance session learning various Hora forms.



LIGHTS, CAMERA CHUTZPAH!

"Sunday? But that's Simchas Torah!" – Val Kilmer in "Top Secret"

The history of cinema is intertwined with stories of Jewish influence, experience and philosophy. This fun, out-there course explores the evolution of film through a specifically Jewish lens. We trace the history of the Jewish component of Hollywood through the last 100 years. Along the way we stop to examine the problems of portraying the Holocaust on screen, and how this question has been addressed over time. We also look at common Jewish themes in the movies: exile, immigration, Israel and representations of Jewish tradition; and the common stereotypes: the outsider, the schlemiel and the superhero! We consider what it takes to watch a film in a specifically Jewish way, with a healthy dollop of classic film theory, which Sam Greenblatt, with his MA in film, provides.



Rembrandt's Sephardim

The Story and Art of Marranos, Messianics, Merchants & Buccaneers



REMBRANDT'S SEPHARDIM | 5 SESSIONS

The expulsion from Spain ended the glory of one of the diaspora's most prominent Jewish communities. The Conversos stayed in Spain, pretending to convert to Christianity and suffering the Inquisition, while those who left searched for a new home and old freedoms. They found a haven for their bodies, souls, capital and skills in free Amsterdam and created one of the most powerful Jewish communities the world has ever known: pivotal in the downfall of Spain, the readmission of Jews to England, the settling of the New World, and the rise of global Messianism in the 17th century. Rembrandt, master of the portrait, lived with them, painted them and played a role in the creation of an interfaith Messianic movement centred on the writings of one of most charismatic Dutch Sephardic Rabbis, Rabbi Menashe ben Israel. The course includes an art appreciation session as well as a visit to an Art Gallery to view its Rembrandt etchings.

Warhol's Ten Jews



WARHOL'S TEN JEWS | 4 SESSIONS

"They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself." – Andy Warhol

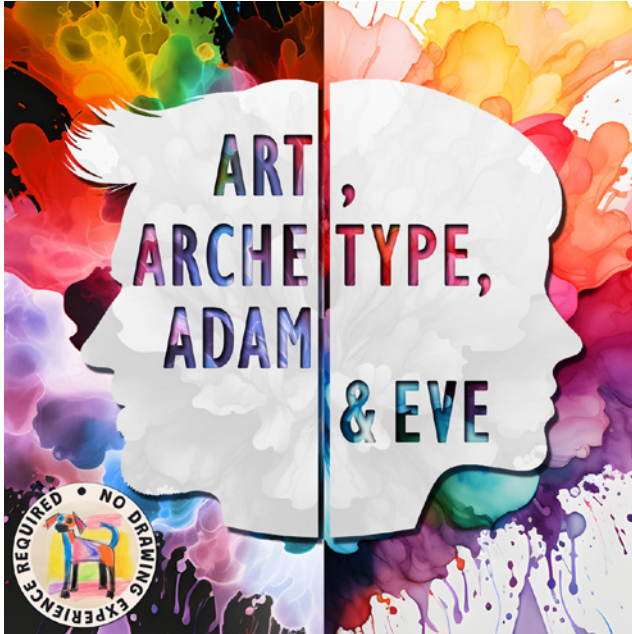
The Jewish people has produced some of the world's most influential leaders in almost every sphere: art, philosophy, science, ethics, literature, music, spirituality, politics and more. Their influence extends across the globe and down the history of human beings. In 1980, art dealer, Ronald Feldman, suggested to world-renowned artist, Andy Warhol, to create a series of 10 influential Jewish leaders, after an Israeli dealer asked for a series of portraits of Golda Meir. The initial response from critics was extremely negative, but despite this, the series was embraced by Jews throughout the world. Join the Academy faculty and the Wits Art Museum for a journey into the lives and impact of: Sarah Bernhardt, Louis Brandeis, Martin Buber, Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, George Gershwin, Franz Kafka, the Marx Brothers, Golda Meir and Gertrude Stein.

FOOD, G-D, NEUROSCIENCE AND THE JEWS 3 SESSIONS

Matza and manna. Kneidlach and kugel. Milk and honey. Jews and food, it seems, go together like bagel and lox. Where does the relationship with Jews and food begin? Do we eat to live or live to eat? The desire to eat begins in Genesis and continues throughout Jewish history; from the fruitarians of the Garden of Eden to the gluttony in the desert, from apples in honey to the wine and bread of Shabbat. Dr Yardena Bauer investigates Jews, their relationship with food, and the science behind it, from the beginning of the Bible to the Shul Brocha (Kiddush). Through a combination of text and neuroscience, Jewish law, tradition and nutrition, we'll unpack what lies behind taste and texture, desire, addiction and health.

Join us in a feast for the mind.





ART, ARCHETYPE, ADAM AND EVE 4 SESSIONS

If you have nothing at all to create, perhaps you can create yourself – Carl Jung

An archetype is the first type, the image of something on which all others are moulded. In the Tanakh (Bible), we have a repository of the most powerful and relatable archetypes in our lives, from Adam to Rachel, Devorah to David. Archetypes are also, according to Carl Jung, patterns of thought that seep from the past experience of the entire human race into our present minds – what is known today as “the collective unconscious”.

Gabriela Mendelsohn, art therapist, and Ilana Stein go on a journey both experiential and intellectual as they explore the role of archetypes in our Torah and our own lives through the lens of art therapy. Art therapy, among other functions, encapsulates images, image making and imagination to draw out the unconscious and ultimately bring about emotional regulation, self- reflection, and personal growth. This is an opportunity to break boundaries, tap into your inner creativity and gain insight into images both universal and Jewish, and how they relate to our own lives.





Soul and Structure



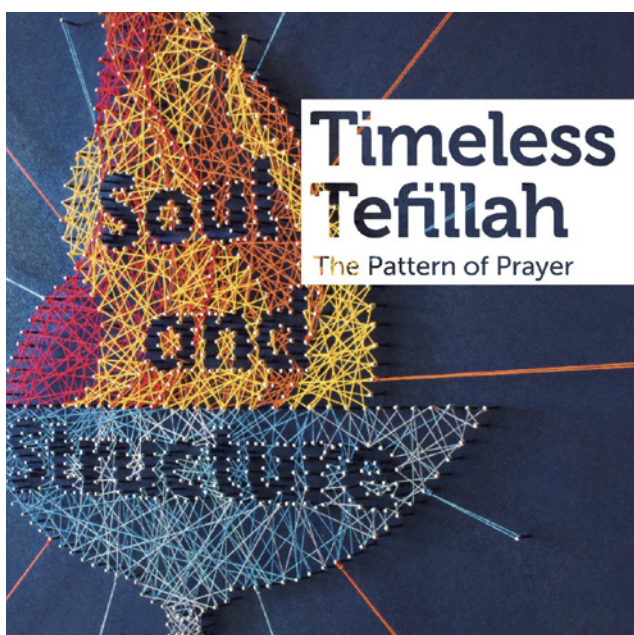
SONG OF THE DAY – SHIR SHEL YOM 7 SESSIONS

As one of the earliest and most potent forms of written supplication, Psalms are ubiquitous in all Jewish prayer services. At the conclusion of the daily morning prayer service (Shacharit), the Song of the Day (Shir Shel Yom) is recited – becoming a collection of seven Psalms, each corresponding to a day of the week. The origins of this prayer can be traced back to what was one of the most moving and inclusive rituals of the Temple Service, one that captivated the minds and hearts of the people. Today, the Song of the Day seems to fall prey to being rushed and said with little focus. It is time to let this prayer reignite our spiritual imagination. Through in-depth and engaging textual analysis we breathe life back into this often-disregarded part of prayer. This course is suited to any individual looking for ways to begin their day with purpose, mindfulness and lasting inspiration.



SONG OF THE HEIGHTS | 4 SESSIONS

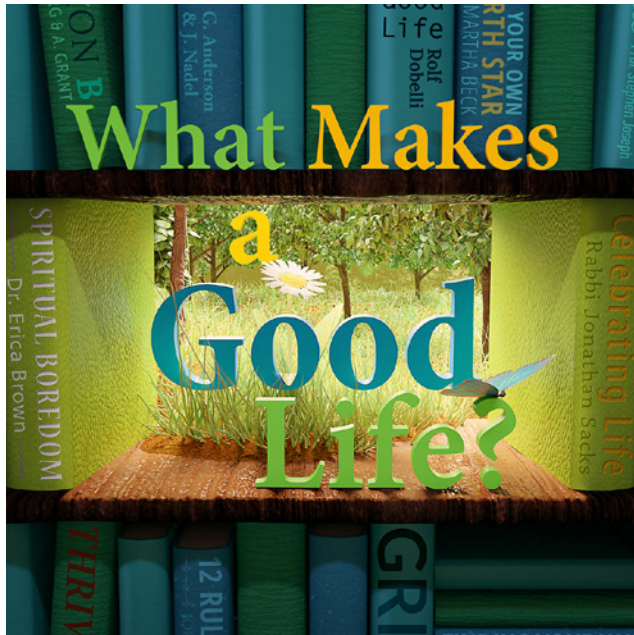
The book of Psalms contains 150 chapters, each of them woven with words of masterful poetic praise and worship. These Psalms have been on the lips and hearts of Jews ever since the times of King David; they have been called upon during moments of pain and joy. As Jews enter the period of the High Holidays, certain Psalms have become the central chords of the melody of Elul and Rosh Hashanah: Psalm 27 (said every day), Psalm 24 (said after Ma'ariv of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur) and Psalm 130 (said during the Ten Days of Teshuvah). Take a soulful journey to explore these profound Songs, through textual analysis and the overall view of the time of year, so as to create inspiration and connection with ourselves and the Creator.



TIMELESS TEFILLAH | 6 SESSIONS

When you utter the words, "Hear O' Israel," would it not be wonderful to be able to hear, deep down, the rhythms, the chords, the roots and the meaning of what you say? One of Judaism's core contributions to the world is to develop the human need to pray and imbue all its variations – personal and communal prayer, requests, praise, thanksgiving – with meaning and purpose. After establishing principles for the modes and purpose of prayer in general, we examine the prayers in the Siddur such as Shema, Amidah, Kaddish, Pesukei D'Zimrah, and others. This approach serves as a framework for understanding each of these prayer's roots in the Tanach. By examining the way the different modes of prayer are set out in the Siddur, and their interrelationship, we hope to gain insight into the overall framework in which tefillah operates, enhancing the general practice and understanding of Jewish prayer.





WHAT MAKES A GOOD LIFE? | 5 SESSIONS

Inspiration through the lens of Jewish wisdom and the bookshelves of the world.

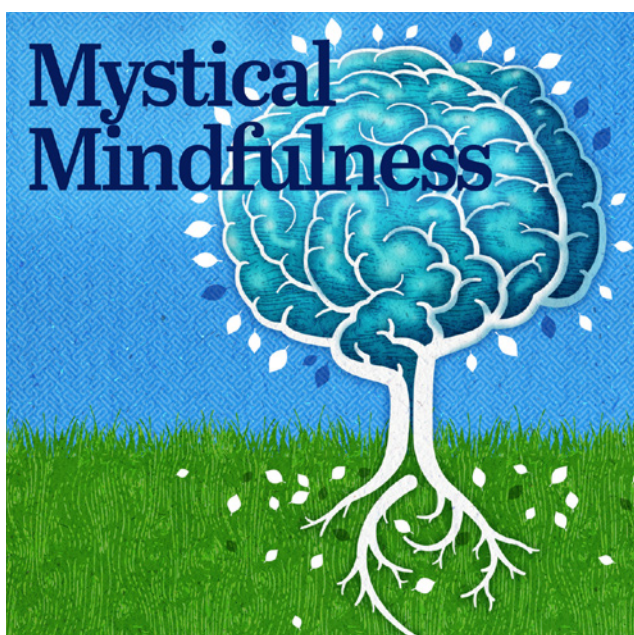
If you wander into any bookstore (online or real), one of the most prevalent themes throughout literature is: 'How to live a good life' Join the conversation with Brene Brown, Sheryl Sandberg, Jordan Peterson, Viktor Frankl, Pedram Shojai, Rolf Dobelli and reflect with Rav Kook, Rabbi Akiva, Rav Soloveitchik, Rabbi David Nossel, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Dr Erica Brown and others. We plumb the depths of happiness and joy; daring, doing and resilience; faith, meaning and storytelling; giving and taking; stillness and being. Do we agree with these ideas? Do we like them? What resonates with us more? There are books which lend 21st language to ancient Torah wisdom, and there are books which challenge preconceived thoughts and beliefs.

This is a voyage of exploration through the vision presented by 18 different authors on this topic, and reflected through the prism of Jewish thought.



YOUR LIFE'S PURPOSE | 3 SESSIONS

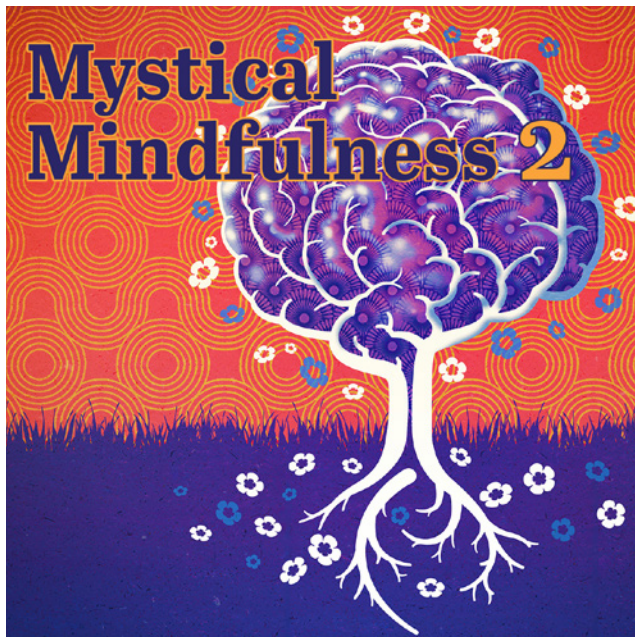
Purpose can guide life decisions, influence behaviour, shape outlook, offer a sense of direction, and create every day meaning. A purpose-centred life is a life that matters – rich, rewarding and full. How do you find purpose? How do you uncover your unique raison d'être? How do you craft a sense of significance, of shlichut, in your own life? Unlike the traditional format of a teacher-learner classroom, in this Engage Space, we read, learn and converse together – exploring texts, unpacking ideas and asking questions. In three sessions, we explore the ancient wisdom of the Torah, consider the question through the lens of great Jewish thinkers like the Kotzke Rebbe and Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik ztz'l, and lean on the thoughts of newer voices like Martha Beck and Rabbi Jonathan Sacks ztz'l.



MYSTICAL MINDFULNESS WORKSHOP PART 1 | 4 SESSIONS

When practiced in a consistent fashion, mindfulness has been demonstrated to have physical, emotional and mental health-promoting benefits, finding balance and integration in a chaotic and deafening world. Can it be practiced as a Jew? What are some of the similarities between Judaism (especially Kabbalah) and the Eastern spiritual paths such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Sufism? Mystic and psychologist Yochi Ress takes us on an exciting, experiential and engaging journey through the Jewish foundations of Mindfulness; along the way you may invigorate your Judaism and your life through an expanded vision, understanding and tools to help you integrate the conceptual models and insights that you unlock during the workshop. Highlights include a 20-minute "sound journey meditation", a unique system of teaching mindfulness that Yochi has developed.





MYSTICAL MINDFULNESS WORKSHOP PART 2 | 3 SESSIONS

"Living Judaism is not meant to cut you off from the world around you. It is intended to keep you from getting cut off from the world within you." – Rabbi David Zeller z"l

A 'Deep Dive' into connection through Tefillah, imagine your prayer evolving into a deeply personal journey, that that grounds you as well as enables you to transcend. A beautiful, passionate dance between the masculine and feminine parts of your Soul. A pathway to 'come home' to your true Essence, and to the realisation and integration of the ever-present myriad possibilities of who you can become... 'Listen' to the deeper reverberations of the Shema prayer, as we open up the foundational meditative tool. Explore a new 'standing' in relation to Amidah prayer, applying several lenses that unlock worlds of meaning to this core of our daily prayer services. Discover the transformational power of conscious Torah text and ritual with Yochi Ress.



INNER MOON, OUTER SPACE AND SACRED TIME | 3 SESSIONS

We shall not cease from exploration

And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time.

– T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets

The moon has figured largely in the imagination of humanity, in its quest to explore beyond Earth. In Jewish thought and understanding, the moon symbolises the measuring of sacred time, renewal and rebirth. It is a guide to the Jewish year, and a meaning-laden symbol for our connection to G-d, and the space within our beings. Yochi Ress delves into the meaning of the moon, why we celebrate Rosh Chodesh at its waning, what Kiddush Levana (sanctification of the new moon) is really all about, and what it means to bring it into our lives.

Because the moon is where outer space meets inner meaning.



A SPIRITUAL HIGH | 3 SESSIONS

"... they perceived the G-d of Israel, and beneath His feet was like the forming of a sapphire brick and like the appearance of the heavens for clarity..." Sh'mot 24:9-10

At Mount Sinai, the Jewish people encountered the Holy One in a supreme moment of connection. Ever since then, the idea of coming close to Hashem is one that people strive for in different ways from prophecy and holy fire of the Temple to meditation and prayer. Today, many struggle to link to the Divine. Many are trying "easy" solutions – do they "work"? Is it part of our tradition? Is it right? Are they just chemical illusions of intimacy? Yochi Ress and guests take us on a journey to align our hearts and minds with wonder and awe, unpack the history of spiritual ecstasy in Judaism, and consider how Halachic and experiential elements of our religion are interwoven. How do we find the connection channels that are more personally resonant and relevant? How does this all fit into our spiritual and physical wellbeing?





HIGH HOLIDAY HOOTENANNY | 6 SESSIONS

Origins, Connections and Insights into the month of Tishrei and its holidays.

Hootenanny is a Scottish word for a party or celebration. And Tishrei is the undisputed month of holidays and hootenannies, of judgement and joy, of awe and apples. Rav Doron Chitiz celebrates this time through a range of topics and discussions, from the sublime Torah readings and prayers to the myths and origins of Rosh Hashanah, from shofar to dancing with the Torah. Each session considers a different topic or nuance, so that by the time we arrive at the first of Tishrei, we have an understanding that is both well-rounded and in-depth of this glorious, awe-filled time of the year. Sessions include: The origins and history of Rosh Hashanah, what beginnings mean, Machzor meanings, myths, mitzvot and music.



RABBI SACKS, REFLECTION AND RETURN 4 SESSIONS

G-d believes in us more than we believe in ourselves. (Rabbi Jonathan Sacks ztz"l)

The month of Elul and the High Holy Days is filled with energy, emotion and self-contemplation, and Rabbi Jonathan Sacks wrote much about it, whether in his machzorim (prayer books) or in articles and books on the subject. It is also the time of the year when we read the last, fifth book of the Torah – Devarim. Is there a connection between the two, and if so, how does it help us approach G-d, and our own selves, during this time?

This course reflects on some of Rabbi Sacks' favourite themes, such as self-change, faith, love, hope, spirituality, and forgiveness, and his flair for interweaving text and philosophy, love of G-d and humanity – and ultimately his love of words – devarim.



ENLIGHTENMENT | 4 SESSIONS

Chanukah seems to be for youngsters. Goodies vs. baddies, a cool miracle, dreidels... But the deeper we dive, the more we discover there are murky depths behind the fun – and many more questions than answers.

How do we know the story of Chanukah? If it's so important, why isn't the story in our Tanach? Why do the rabbis of the Talmud choose to focus on the miracle of the oil? And, why, out of the many miracles in our long history, did our sages choose to dedicate an entire eight-day festival (including hallel and Torah readings) to this one?

We dive deeply into the history, texts, law and custom, meaning and motives, through the oil and the flame to bring hidden meanings to light. Because there's more to Chanukah than meets the eye....

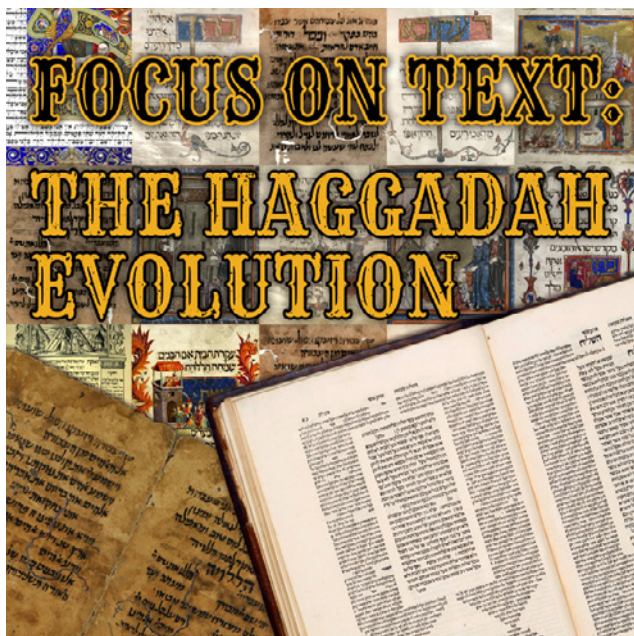




GUTS AND DOUGHNUTS

The miracle of Chanukah took place in 165 BCE. But in fact, this victory against all odds is the middle of the story, one that stretched over years before and continued long after. Yet it is that moment that we commemorate, with lights of oil, and oily doughnuts, Hallel and special prayers, encompassing two types of miracles – the military and the menorah.

Yet for such a long, important festival, there's little about it in the Talmud and nothing in the Tanach. How do we know the story of Chanukah? Why is it not in the Tanach? What is the Book of the Maccabees? Where can you find Megillat Antiochus and why don't we read that either? What's the real miracle of Chanukah and how does it relate to our world today? The Academy unpacks these ideas, reads a little of the texts we never read – and discovers the momentous moment of light and war.



THE HAGGADAH EVOLUTION | 2 SESSIONS

And you shall tell your child on that day, saying, "Because of this, the Lord did [this] for me when I went out of Egypt (Exodus 13:8)

Where does the Haggadah come from? How did it evolve into what we have today? Diving into the texts that form the well-known pages of the Haggadah, we can acquire a greater understanding of the origins of the Haggadah and its disordered Seder. We move from the earliest sources of Tanach through the Midrash, Mishnah and Gemara in an attempt to understand the what, how and why of the evolution of Judaism's most famous evening and its texts.



SEDER – THE STORY WE WRITE TOGETHER

Order and Dis-Order in the Seder

Our Pesach Seder is a moment where, every year, we look back and then forward, linking each of us in an eternal chain, back to our foundational story and forward to Jerusalem. The meaning of 'seder' is 'order' – yet ... it also seems quite haphazard: there's a Seder plate, we chew parsley (or is it potato?), make a bitter herb sandwich, we're lifting the matza, we're leaning and drinking... How does such a seemingly random gathering of rituals create that moment? The Academy takes a journey through a few of the many fascinating ideas behind the perceived arbitrariness, talking about wine, women and song, the notion of fours and fives and finally see if, once and for all, there is a seder (order) to the Seder.





PESACH WITH RABBI SACKS | 2 SESSIONS

Pesach is where the past does not die but lives, in the chapter we write in our own lives and in the story we tell our children. (Rabbi Sacks, ztz'l)

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks loved stories. And his favourite may well have been that of Pesach, which he called “oldest and most transformative story of hope ever told”, writing reams on it, from regular postings to an entire Haggadah, all of which reached deep into the ethos, the hope and the formation of a nation that Pesach and its narrative represents.

This short course dips into the wealth of colour and light that Rabbi Sacks brought to the story he loved so much.



THE STRUGGLE FOR MEANING – KINNOT OF TISHA B'AV | 1 SESSION

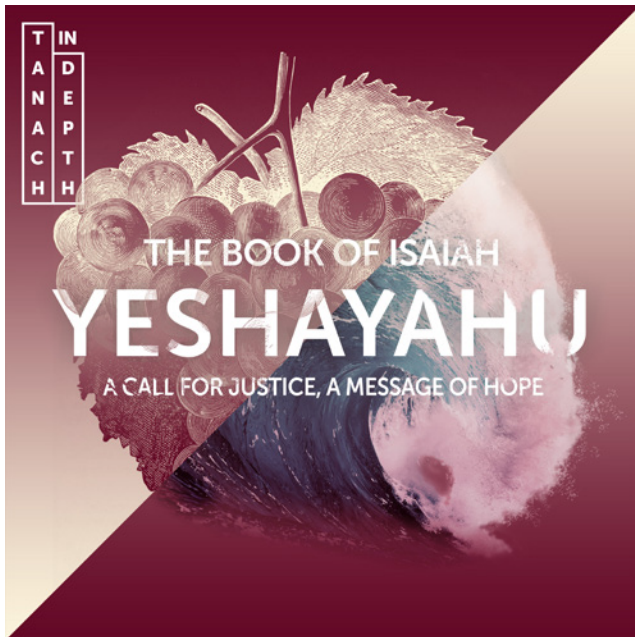
On Tisha B'Av (the 9th of Av), we mourn the destruction of the Temple, gathering as communities to recite Kinnot – liturgical poems and elegies composed at difficult times in our history and that reflect upon themes of tragedy and loss. Such words awaken within us feelings of longing and dejection over the Temple's loss, and more importantly, the distancing of our close relationship with G-d.

What is the purpose of doing so? Where do the Kinnot come from, who wrote them and why are they so difficult to understand? In what way does reciting them help us in understanding this day of national sadness or to come closer to G-d? Adrian Chiger unpacks these ideas, delving into the history, the themes and the messages of these poems.





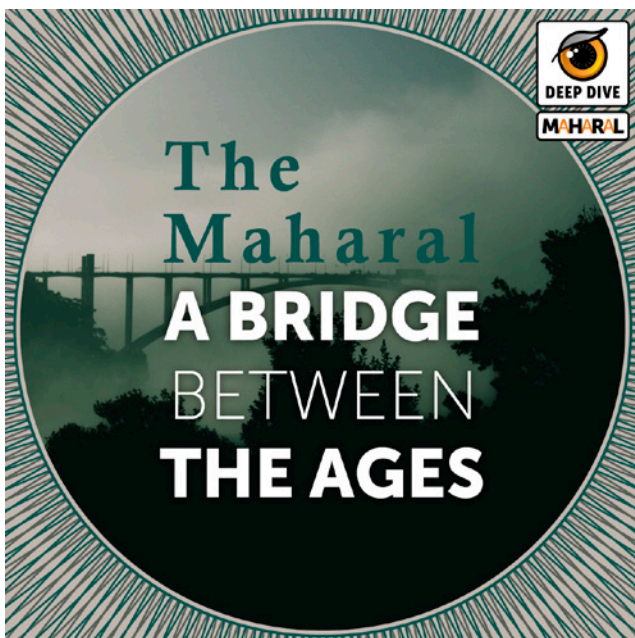
In-Depth Study / Beit Midrash



YESHAYAHU (ISAIAH) IN DEPTH | YEAR

"They shall beat their swords into ploughshares..." – Isaiah 2:4

Yeshayahu's famous lines frame the UN's raison d'être, yet his reputation as prophet of peace and utopia is just one aspect of the man, his times and his messages. Yeshayahu and his fellow prophets were prophets of social justice, railing against the oppression of rich over poor and strong over vulnerable. Yeshayahu was a prophet for his time – a time of flux, of empires rising, and a time when Israel had the chance to change history. In such challenging times, he brought a message of hope and the power of second chances, exhorting his people to rise up to the challenge. This is a year-long course of in-depth textual study, beit midrash-style learning, where we plumb the depths of Yeshayahu's prophecies, his gracious poetry, and his uncompromising morality.



MAHARAL – A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE AGES | YEAR

The Maharal of Prague is a central figure in Jewish Thought. He is the foundation of much of Chassidut (Hasidic Judaism), underpinned the Mussar (Ethics) movement and is a staple in all streams of Jewish thinking. One of the first to weave together strands of Kabbalistic as well as Philosophical Torah thinking, he created a unique approach which deals with the widest, most foundational foundations of Judaism, using this to explore the smallest details of mitzvot. The Academy's Rabbi Ramon Widmonte, one of the English-speaking world's foremost translators and explorers of the Maharal takes a journey into the history, Torah and impact of one of Judaism's most iconic sages.





Current, Contemporary and Events



TORAHWILD | TOURS AND WALKS IN NATURE

"In order to serve G-d, one needs.... the enjoyment of the beauties of nature... majestic mountains, flowing rivers... For all these are essential to the spiritual development of even the holiest people." - Rabbi Abraham ben Moses (1186-1237)

Between nature walks and drives, safaris, sundowners and silent tefillah/meditation at dawn, Academy Torah sessions and first-class accommodation and meals, we attempt to answer the classic question: How should a Jew view and interact with the natural world? Using classic and modern Torah sources, we explore the Torah's attitude to Earth, its plants and animals, to science, conservation, "green" lifestyles and to appreciating the grandeur and beauty of nature.

TorahWild is where you can step out on the wild side of Torah as we encounter the perfect balance between nature and Torah.



TU BISH'VAT – REBIRTH OF THE TREES 1 SESSION

A Do-it-yourself Seder

Tu BiSh'vat, the Birthday of the Trees, evolved from an agricultural date into a kabbalistic "seder" and into a day of planting trees. All through, the deeper meaning is that of growth, energy, rebirth and reconnection – of humanity and the Earth, and of the soul and body.

The Academy runs a DIY Tree-Birthday party that combines all these elements – where either together or online, we each create our own "seder," with fruits, four cups of wine (or grape juice for the kids) – and eat, drink and celebrate Israel and its fruits as well as the beautiful Earth on which we live.



ELUL MORNING MEANDER AND MUSE

As Elul begins, our thoughts and hearts turn to introspection, to renewal of our connection with G-d, each other and our selves. The Alter Rebbe coined the phrase "The King is in the field", indicating a special closeness of Hashem to humanity during this time, where the monarch passes through the fields and "anyone who wishes may get close and greet G-d".

Ilana Stein and Yochi Ress explore the power of being in the fields – or veld in this case, the Johannesburg Botanical Gardens. Here we meander amongst the trees and flowers and muse. We learn about Creation and re-creation, return and growth, philosophical thought and mystical, intimate connection between humanity and nature.

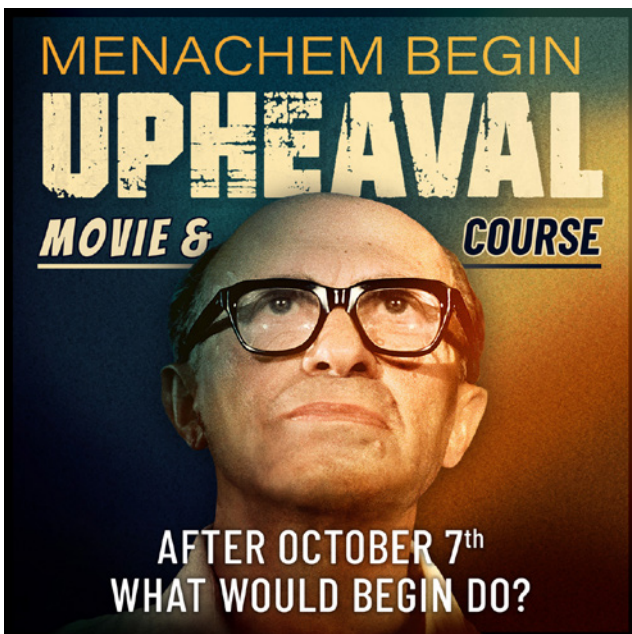




THE HANDMAID'S TALE – THE JEWISH TAKE

The Handmaid's Tale is an explosive dystopian novel written in 1985. Its premise seems to be based on the story of our forefather and mother, Yaacov and Rachel, quoted straight from Breishit – the story of surrogate mothers. However, this work and the TV series have surged into contemporary culture by painting the Bible and religion as dangerous, primitive, exploitative and autocratic, something to be feared and rejected in the 21st-century worship of the individual.

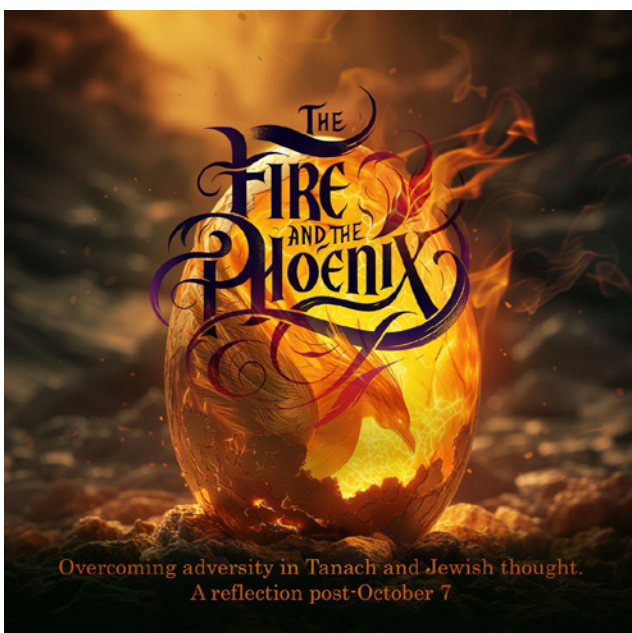
How do we face our own biblical texts and how they are used in this book? How do we face the current, binary, simplistic narrative, pitting the untethered worship of the individual versus a black vision of Biblical enslavement? Ilana Stein takes us between the lines of the novel and our own Book.



MENACHEM BEGIN – UPHEAVAL

After the upheaval of October 7th, what would Begin do?

He was called a terrorist; he sat in KGB jail; he carried out the world's first bombing of a nuclear reactor against massive international opposition; he made peace. Together with our partners, the Hidden Light, SAZF and Linksfield Shul, The Academy is proud to present South Africa's first viewing of the first-ever documentary made on the life and leadership of Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. This is followed by an in-depth course on the man and the leader. Join us as we immerse ourselves in the world of Menachem Begin – and draw out a set of learnings for Jews after the Upheaval of October 7th.



THE FIRE AND THE PHOENIX | 4 SESSIONS

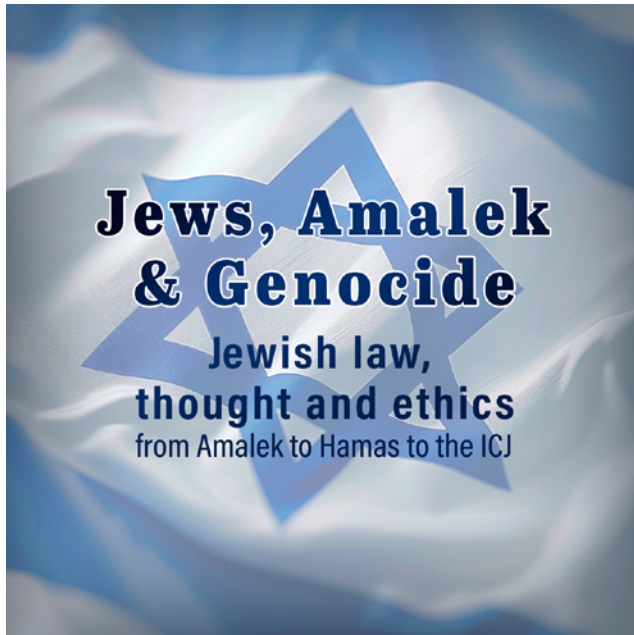
Thriving through adversity in Tanach and Jewish thought. A reflection post-October 7.

Getting knocked down in life is a given. Getting up and moving forward is a choice. — Zig Ziglar

How do we face hard times? How do we get up after we've been knocked down? As always, we turn to the Tanach and Jewish history to see what our ancestors have always done in times of trouble. From the Exodus to our modern response to the Holocaust, we will find the overarching premise on which our history is built: It is always the phoenix.

This course explores core elements, similarities and differences which help reframe the experience of October 7 and what followed. Using the Book of Esther, Exodus, Job, the writings and thoughts of modern thinkers like Rav Soloveitchik and Rav Amital, dive into the ashes and emerge re-energised and emboldened.





JEW, AMALEK AND GENOCIDE | 4 Sessions

Jewish law, thought and ethics – from Amalek to Hamas to the ICJ

"You shall erase the memory of Amalek from under the heavens; do not forget!" Devarim 25:19

As we find ourselves in a time of war, we turn to the Torah to understand and to be our guide. What does the Torah think about war? Does it encourage it or is it a necessary evil? Does the Torah countenance or perhaps require what Israel currently stands accused of: genocide? Are references to Amalek genocidal? From the first war recounted in the Torah through the laws given in Devarim (Deuteronomy), to the Talmud and classical thinkers and commentators, the Torah portrays a breathtakingly nuanced view. Far from glorification, Judaism presents a view of war that finds no glory in death but finds purpose in the moral view.

Take a deep dive into a clash of civilisations: the Torah's ethics of war and its creation of a universal attitude towards life and the use of force - impacting and changing Western thought forever.



SOUL AND JEWISH SELF-DEFENCE

"Jewish blood is not free for taking, is not hefker."
(Rav Soloveitchik, Kol Dodi Dofek)

For two thousand years, Jewish blood was treated as worthless. Just over 150 years ago, Jews began to question what they could do to defend themselves. But the idea of Jewish self-defence is not modern at all. It is rooted in the Torah, Jewish history and values – from Abraham to Deborah to Yehudit to the Maccabees and Bar Kochba. Since October 7th, these ideas and skills have been cast in a new light, becoming more relevant than ever. The Academy and the CSO run a unique learning and practical experience, which includes:

- Practical self-defence and awareness workshop, run by expert CSO trainers – free of charge.
- Academy educators unpack the concept of self-defence in the Torah, Jewish values and law and in our history. We'll look in the mirror, at how we saw ourselves in our land some 3,000 years ago, and how we see ourselves today.

Learn and practice – the art of Jewish self-defence and the Jewish ideas behind it.



FROM AV 9 TO OCTOBER 7

The literature of grief and hope across 2,000 years

Tisha B'Av after October 7 took on a different tone, with 2,000-year-old memories of destruction overlaid with the most recent tragedies. Our ancient texts gained new meaning and elicited questions: How do our texts make meaning of a singular event? How do they help us today?

The book of Eichah – Lamentations – was written at the time of the destruction of the first Temple. Kinnot – poems of lament – have been written for a thousand years or more across our long and tragic diaspora in response to massacres, crusades and holocaust since then. This short course looks at the need to write and pray in reaction to an event, to making meaning of memory and to attempt to understand what more we need to do in the face of destruction. Join the Academy for an experiential look into the literature that reacts and responds to grief and tragedy, both on the 9th of Av and on October 7th.





Academy Book Launches

Over the years, we are proud to have had a number of our faculty who have written and published books – and we have had the book launches to celebrate them.

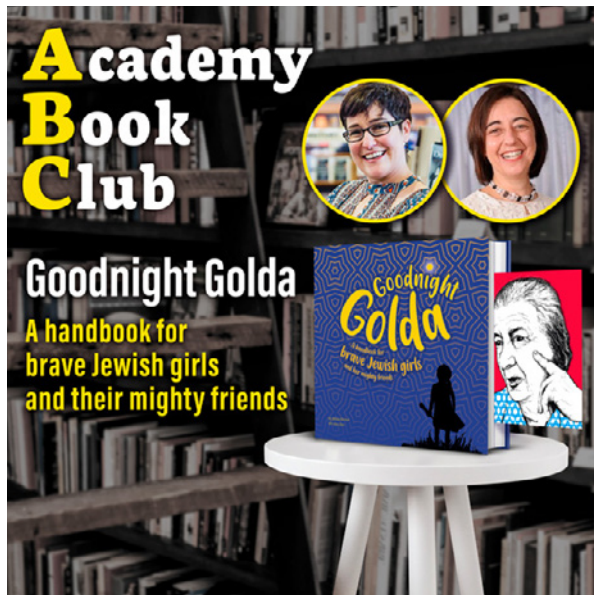


QUESTIONING BELIEF

Book: Questioning Belief by Rabbi Dr Raphael Zarum

Rabbi Zarum, the Dean of London School of Jewish Studies was indispensable to the launch of the Academy along with the late Maureen Kendler z'l. It was an honour for the Academy to host his South African book launch in Johannesburg and Cape Town in 2024.

About: In this original and thought-provoking work, twelve challenging questions are presented which are posed by Jewish thinkers today. These are questions about the veracity of the Torah, the morality of its laws, and the beliefs it engenders. To address these questions, Rabbi Zarum brings a wide swathe of historical, scientific, and philosophical research to bear on classical Jewish sources – with stimulating results.



GOODNIGHT GOLDA

Book: Goodnight Golda – by Batya Bricker with Ilana Stein

About: Goodnight Golda is a girl-power collective of the true stories of 32 Jewish women who shaped history in unique and remarkable ways. With wit and talent, looks and perspectives, the women featured in this collection hail from Biblical times right up to today, blazing their own trails in every sphere of life, and spanning countries all over the globe. Each heroine's story is distinctive and relatable; accompanied by full colour portraits that honour the women who are brave, strong and true. And certain to inspire.



SHOHAM'S BANGLE

Book: Shoham's Bangle, by Sarah Sassoon

About: Shoham's Bangle is a children's picture book about a young Iraqi-Jewish girl whose life is suddenly turned upside down when her family must leave and immigrate to Israel with only one suitcase. It is based on Sarah's memories of her grandmother's bangles that jangled as she rolled b'ab'eb' tamar dough and shared the family's history.





STATE OF HALAKHA

Book: State of Halakha, by Rav Aviad Tabory

About: The system of Jewish law is designed to guide us in major and minor areas of our lives. However, how is it applied in unprecedented situations? In this fascinating new work, rabbi and educator Aviad Tabory goes through watershed events and major issues in modern Israeli history, examining them through the lens of halakha.





Jewish Tours and Travel



LITHUANIA TOUR

Lithuania, Lita, the Heim.

Join the Academy and Rabbi Ramon Widmonte on an unforgettable journey into the legacy of Lithuania.

With one day devoted to individual, guided exploration of the Shtetl of your choice; the rest of the trip focuses on the heritage of hundreds of years of Jewish life in Vilna, Slobodka, Kovno, Kaidan, Shavl and Ponovezh, whilst also tracing the tragic end which many communities faced in the Holocaust.

Lita – a legacy worth living.



POLAND TOUR – A JOURNEY TO LIFE

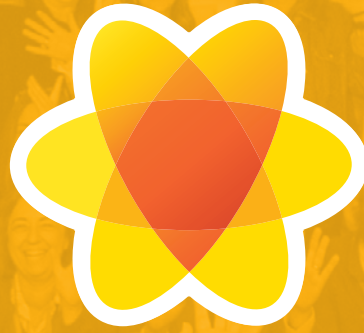
This journey takes us through Poland, to reconnect with the lost life of Jewish Poland and to bear witness to the Holocaust: Warsaw, Treblinka, Lublin, Majdanek, Krakow, and Auschwitz-Birkenau. All land expenses and meals included.



JERUSALEM MARATHON TOUR

The Jerusalem Marathon epitomises the combination of the physical and the spiritual – and marks a return to the holistic and holy Jew. Joshua, Devorah, David and Yehudit were powerful, strong Torah scholars, prophets and warriors and serve as heroes and role models on this tour through the modern State of Israel: Walk the site of the epic battle between David and Goliath, walk through the alleyways that are the Machane Yehuda Market and hear stories about the people, the shops, the history and the changes that make up the famous Jerusalem market. Visit S'derot, the largest city closest to Gaza and ongoing target of rockets and mortar shells from the Gaza Strip. We crawl, walk or run various distances in the Jerusalem Marathon and end with an amazing Shabbat in Jerusalem's Old City.





The Academy

of Jewish Thought and Learning

More about The Academy

The Academy of Jewish Thought and Learning began in August 2012 and is the largest Jewish adult learning programme in South Africa today. With over 4,500 students across the world, the Academy offers a unique style of empowering, adult learning coupled with exposure to some of South Africa's top Jewish educators.

The Academy showcases the best of relevant Jewish thought and values within the traditional Jewish community – the result of which is that many intelligent Jews, who had once dismissed Judaism as a source of any bearing to their lives, have re-engaged.

The Academy is a mature, adult space – non-coercive, stimulating, interactive, collaborative and dynamic.

The Academy worked with the London School of Jewish Studies (LSJS) and President of the time, Rabbi Lord Sacks ztz'l; continuing to do so with current President, Chief Rabbi Mirvis; its Dean, Rabbi Dr. Raphael Zarum, and its faculty in creating a South African adaption of the mode of thinking, pedagogics and education that LSJS pioneered in the UK.

Since inception, we have branched out to include several new areas such as facilitating Master's degrees in Jewish Education through LSJS, teacher training and school syllabus creation. The Academy has undertaken to train teachers (Jewish and non-Jewish) in the Jewish Day School system as well as for schools in other countries. We are also active in the non-Jewish education space, teaching students and training teachers on environmental and sustainability topics in previously-disadvantaged South African schools.

Our faculty is drawn from the wide base of thinking, passionate Jews throughout South Africa. Most are professionals by day – doctors, professors, actuaries, lawyers, teachers, psychologists, conservationists and some Rabbis. All are united by their quest for knowledge, love of Torah and desire to learn from and with the members of The Academy community.

OUR IMPACT

Re-engagement: The Academy showcases the best of relevant Jewish thought and values within the traditional Jewish community – the result of which is that many intelligent Jews, who had once dismissed Judaism as a source of any bearing to their lives have re-engaged.

Empowering Adult Learning: The Academy is a mature, adult space – non-coercive, stimulating, interactive, collaborative and dynamic. Adults who have been starved for this type of Jewish exposure are hooked very quickly.

Training of Jewish Studies Teachers: With the launch of the NED (National Education Development) programme, the Academy is the only Jewish Organisation training and nurturing Jewish educators, running National Education Symposia, bringing together over 150 educators from around the country.

Israel Education: The Academy is the only organisation in South Africa ensuring that adults are educated about Israel in a balanced fashion, deepening their knowledge of, pride in and connection to Israel as a country and as a state. Our "Visionaries of Modern Zionism" and "State of Israel version 1.0" are now staples in teacher education.

The "Forgotten Middle": Our key focus is on the "forgotten middle" – the women and men who are the backbone of a Jewish community, but to whom no convincing offer of Jewish learning or values has yet been made.

Lay teachers – relevant and relatable: The Academy has empowered lay teachers to teach. Their common denominator is that they have the ability to teach adults, something not every regular teacher has. Moreover, as lay teachers, they connect to regular Jews with none of the distance which a Rabbi or Rebbetzin has. The effect has proven itself.

Wider Community Impact: A major part of our focus (and of our brand being relevant) is to ensure we are using our knowledge, teachers and courses to impact on the broader, non-Jewish, South African community.

THE ACADEMY BRAND: RELEVANCE, INNOVATION, TECHNOLOGY AND PROFESSIONALISM

The wide scope of our courses and teachers broadcast the strongest message that we are relevant, and that Jewish values are relevant.

We innovated within the Adult Education space by creating a disruptive business model: we priced the value of Jewish learning very high and our aim was to create a brand meant great value, professionalism, slick marketing – all things which had never before been associated with Jewish learning.

Secondly, we ensure that we make the best use of technology we can. Our students book and pay online, there is an online Student Management System which includes access to audio and video recordings of the sessions for which the student is registered, as well as access to online notes.

Creating a Jewish Education Organisation that breathed professionalism is part of the Academy DNA.

We have attempted to introduce professionalism into every aspect of what we do: from starting on time to ending on time, to creating professional learning and teaching materials, to running honest evaluations of our courses and presenters and creating a rigorous training process for teachers.



Online and In Person

Our online offerings utilise a range of platforms and technologies in conjunction with the human element – our popular Academy faculty – allowing us to share our knowledge and love of learning, and which allows people from all over the country and indeed the world to learn and connect.



1. Live Zoom and Hybrid Courses

Post-Covid-19, we began to offer courses both in person and on Zoom. In this way we have been able to reach more people than ever before.



2. Learn when you like courses

These are some of our internationally-acclaimed courses – complete with source sheets, audio and extra reading – to be done online, in the comfort of one's home and in one's own time.

Follow Us



1. Social Media and Communications

Finally, we communicate with our community via email, WhatsApp group and of course on Facebook

Subscribe to receive updates and news here –

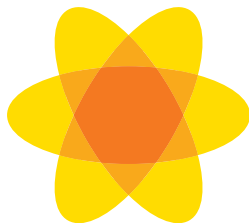
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 courses@theacademy.org.za



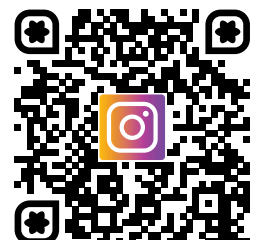
2. The Academy Website

With our new website, we have created two options to become an Academy Subscriber:

The Explorer Plan or The Unlimited Learner. The latter has a monthly subscription fee that allows you to join all live, online and past courses for free. Both ensure that members are the first to receive notifications of new courses, events, learning opportunities and relevant special offers.

At The Academy, we believe that access to education is a fundamental right for everyone, and that by sharing Torah, we are practicing one of its basic tenets. To that end, no-one is turned away, regardless of what they can afford to pay.

 www.adult-ed.academy





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Sydenham Shul

South African Zionist Federation

Saltzman Family Centre (Linksfeld Shul)

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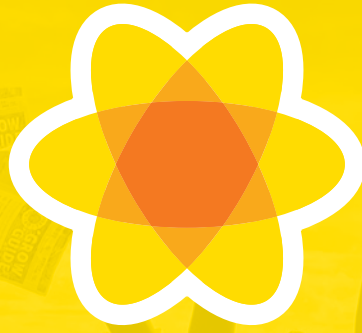
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We rise by lifting others



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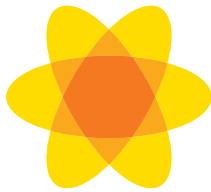
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Other Academy Initiatives



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OTHER ACADEMY INITIATIVES



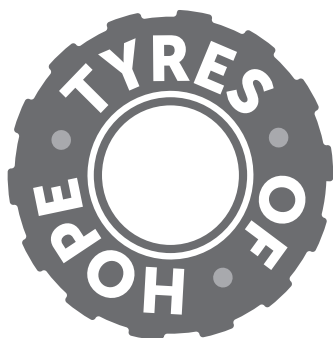
National Education
Development
Programme

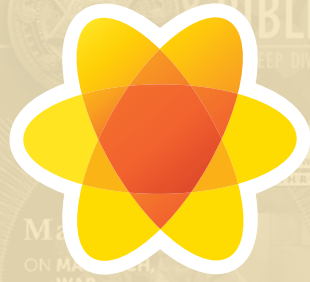


South African Association for
Jewish & Hebrew Education Professionals



The
Future
Fund





The Academy
of Jewish Thought and Learning

Join the Community of Thinkers

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The Academy of Jewish Thought & Learning

