

THE TORAH STUDIO

AN ENTREPRENEURIAL CAPSTONE BY LIANA WERTMAN



RHEA HIRSCH SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
HEBREW UNION COLLEGE JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
MASTERS OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP CLASS OF 2022

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

On the day that they removed Rabban Gamliel from his position and appointed Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya in his place **they dismissed the guard at the door and permission was granted to the students to enter.** As Rabban Gamliel would proclaim and say: Any student whose inside is not like his outside, will not enter the study hall. But **on that day several benches** had to be added. Rabbi Yohanan said: Abba Yosef ben Dostai and the Rabbis disputed this matter. One said: Four hundred benches were added to the study hall. And one said: Seven hundred benches were added to the study hall. Rabban Gamliel was disheartened. He said: Perhaps, Heaven forbid, I prevented Israel from engaging in Torah study.¹

Berakhot 28a

The Torah Studio began as an attempt to throw open the doors to the Beit Midrash. I believe that Torah study is an entry point for many learners to connect, or reconnect, to their Jewishness in an empowered and grounded way. A Torah study practice nourishes learners intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally, while giving them the language and confidence to make their place in the Jewish world. This entry way is not only closed off to new learners, but most often hidden away, accessible only to folks who have already demonstrated Jewish commitment and knowledge. I began imagining what it would have to look like for Torah to be an accessible entry point for people, accessible both to access and, once inside, to actually learn.

I knew this because I was one of those for whom the door was closed and hidden away. The only opportunities presented to me either required location and career changes, or were infrequent and gave me few tools to continue learning on my own. I was searching for a Yoga

¹ Bold indicates exact translation, non-bold indicates added words for translation clarity.

Studio model that offered me accessibility, flexibility of schedule and finances, and a chance to build a serious text study practice. One that allowed me to learn as I was, and at my own pace. I wanted that place to be true to its values, and be a home for all Jews to meet the text authentically together.

I taught our first class right as I began my studies at the Rhea Hirsch School of Education, and in the last two years I've come to understand that simply opening the door of the building isn't enough to make this education accessible. I've come to understand that making learning accessible and empowering requires that we reflect on all aspects of the Beit Midrash into which we're inviting people. We're not looking to just add more benches to the room as it already was, but to reconsider the foundational values of that space, to think about how students feel sitting on the benches we build, to reflect on how and why we share the information we want to teach, and what our learners will do with their learning beyond our walls.

Programs that use the traditional yeshiva model offer some guidance and inspiration, especially progressive versions like Pardes and Hadar. They teach learners how to learn through their lives with a balance of hevruta (partnered learning) and shiur (lectures and discussions). Our goal is to bring the transformative practice and skill building aspects of the traditional Beit Midrash to the general population and try to get as close to an immersive learning experience as we can offer part time. SVARA showed me what an accessible queer normative Beit Midrash could look like. They model how to offer difficult learning at all levels, and balance traditional rigor with deep care and patience for each learner. Our goal is to expand the options for queer normative learning spaces, but also offer a different model that gives more power to the learners both in language choice and scheduling.

In developing the language for the goals and outcomes of my project, I turned to arts education and pedagogy. Reading Maxine Green (2000), John Dewey (2005), and Elliot Eisner (2002) who all describe different outcomes and purposes of arts education, as well as researching the VTS method, I began to envision on my own a Torah pedagogy that more closely resembled arts education ideologies. When one teaches people how to engage deeply with art, when learners are asked to slow down and look closely, to see themselves and others in this work, Eisner (2002) says we teach them to hold multiple complex perspectives beyond their own. Learners are taught to empathize, to see new possibilities, and to find new ways to understand themselves. Torah can do this just as much as a painting in a museum, a sculpture, or poetry.

In bell hooks's *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), I came to understand that this learning would not just be empowering as an entry point, but could and should be liberational. In the book, hooks shares the many ways that teaching can and should be offering empowering tools, and joy, to learners so that they can free themselves from oppressive systems of thought and society. When we give people the chance to explore, to find their own way through a process we give them the keys to their own education and to their Jewish identity, and to be a part of creating the Jewish future they would feel free within.

Arts education is inherently interpersonal, a necessary part of liberation pedagogy (hooks, 1994) as those we are in community with must also be a part of our search for freedom. Engaging with art at the minimum requires that the viewer understand another person, the artist, is engaged in meaning making. In our Jewish context, however, Hevruta adds an automatic third party to this conversation. There are no longer two, possibly opposing ideas, but a third interpreter. Hevruta, Holzer and Kent explain in *Philosophy of Havruta* (2013), allows the learners to hold many meanings and interpretations at once, and pushes them to dive into the text

more deeply to understand our own and other's reasonings. This interwoven and strengthening structure only expands as our classes move into communal discussions, which create themselves a microcosm of an empowered Jewish community.

To clarify, define, and then execute this vision, I needed to name and be guided by my personal educational values. By using our values to guide us, educational leaders are able to continue to follow their mission to teach to our ultimate, not just our most immediate, goals. This Capstone is a collection of documents that tell the story of creating a Jewish educational venture rooted in educational values. In this Capstone you will find The Torah Studio's Mission, Vision, and Values statement, which explicitly names the values that guide this project. The Business Plan shows how this model can be sustained and how we envision its growth. And in my Pedagogical Rationale I share how I build the spaces our students learn in and what I hope they learn with us. My artifacts series show what it looks and feels like to prepare, experience, and reflect upon the time you spend with Torah Studio.

This capstone is a chance to reflect upon and articulate what I've learned in my experience running over 150 courses over four semesters of the Masters in Educational Leadership program. This project provides a look inside The Torah Studio and offers a vision for its future as it has been influenced by my learning at HUC-JIR. You can use this collection to see the thinking behind The Torah Studio and to look at the many pieces that need to be thought through to make a vision come to life. This Capstone is also for those people who are trying to reimagine their own corners of the Jewish world, to rethink it from the ground up and make it more accessible and resilient for the future. Rabbi Elezar Ben Azarya, young and outsider though he was, had to reach a position of power to actually open up the Beit Midrash, and by sharing my

process, learning, and planning, I hope to also help those who want to find their own ways to open up the doors that have been keeping people out of Jewish life and education.



MISSION VISION & VALUES

MISSION AND VISION

MISSION

The Torah Studio is an accessible and inclusive learning space that gives Jews the tools to build a resilient relationship with our traditional Jewish texts.

VISION

The Torah Studio is building a world where every Jew has a nourishing personal relationship with Jewish texts, making them caring and thoughtful participants in the Jewish future.

VALUES

ACCESSIBLE LEARNING



**EMPOWERED
LEARNERS**



**AUTHENTIC
RELATIONSHIPS WITH
TORAH**



**COMMUNAL MEANING
MAKING**



**NOURISHING JEWISH
KNOWLEDGE**

ACCESSIBLE LEARNING



What this means to us

The Torah Studio makes text study accessible in as many ways as possible. Finances, gender, sexuality, race, disability, geography and timing will not bar anyone from our text study. Everyone has beautiful Torah to learn and share with access to the necessary tools and an empowered learning space.

How we show it

- Accessible Learning guides our decision making process for which classes we offer, when we offer them, and who teaches them.
- This value has guided our inexpensive multi-option pricing model.
- We are working on and continually growing our ability to meet a diverse set of needs and accommodations in and out of class. Some of our regular practices include auto-captioning classes and offering large print source sheets in google docs, and offering one on one meeting times with teachers.

EMPOWERED LEARNERS



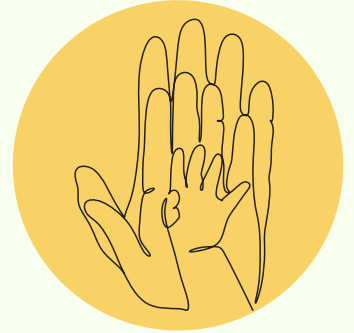
What this means to us

Torah Study is a lifelong practice. Torah Studio gives learners the tools to own their study practice and feel confident in their relationship with Judaism and Jewish texts. At the Torah Studio we believe that every learner is able and ready to learn Torah as their full self.

How we show it

- To Empower Learners we make sure learners feel like they own the tools of Torah study even beyond our classrooms.
- These tools include close responsive reading of Torah, Hevruta (paired learning) practice, intertextual connections, deep relationships with text, and communal meaning building.
- These tools are honed through regular attendance, but can be learned in any session.
- Our drop in model empowers learners to build their own text study practice and set their own pace.
- We believe the more pieces a learner owns of this process, the more it becomes theirs.

AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS WITH TORAH



What this means to us

Strong relationships with Torah allow Jewish people to be authentically themselves in Jewish spaces, and to learn more about themselves in the process. What calls to a learner in the Torah is a reflection of themselves. To do that authentically looks like being able, and safe, to show up as your full self. Many of our courses center and highlight a queer reading of our texts that allow folks to see new parts of themselves, queer or not, reflected in the Torah. We believe that when learners are allowed to honestly and openly engage with difficult texts, they will build stronger relationships with Torah.

How we show it

- The foundations for authentic relationships with Torah are built in Hevruta (partnered learning time). Hevruta time gives learners the chance to closely read a text and begin a dialogue with it.
- When learners share not only from their heart, but base it in and back it up with the text itself, there is much to be learned.
- Giving space and breath for learners to read themselves into the texts in ways traditional interpretation have not.
- We create safe and non-judgemental spaces to dialogue with difficult texts and figure out what they mean to our learners at this moment.

COMMUNAL MEANING MAKING



What this means to us

Torah learning experience is built through practice. All learners have the ability to access meaning in text. Regular practice and knowledge built over time help learners backup and elaborate upon their ideas. The Torah Studio knows every learner has insight into Torah worth sharing. We work together, in loving agreement and disagreement, to uncover the Torah we can bring to life.

How we show it

- To make Communal Meaning Making a reality, we give each person the text and the tools to dive into Torah in each class.
- Teachers are there to help learners grow by supporting, learning, and growing alongside the class, rather than simply offering their own ideas

NOURISHING JEWISH KNOWLEDGE



What this means to us

Text study practices nourish our lives spiritually, intellectually, and emotionally. Jewish texts are at the core of everyday Jewish life, and will be the core of the Jewish future. We believe that more people knowing these Jewish texts, and building deep and resilient relationships with them, will lead to a stronger and more beautiful Jewish future. The Torah Studio wants to share that ease, access, and knowledge of Torah with as many people as possible, especially to people who have historically been kept out of Jewish institutions of learning.

How we show it

- We make Torah Study accessible to first time and long time Torah learners.
- We are careful to share definitions and explanations of any and all references made throughout class. We define Hebrew words, cite what sources are being referred to, offer background information, etc... All of our teachers are also accessible by email and one on one meetings for help beyond class.
- We seek to offer access points to as many Jewish texts as possible through a variety of courses.



PEDAGOGY RATIONALE

Pedagogy Rationale

The Torah Studio offers people the skills they need to dive intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually into Jewish texts. The Torah Studio believes that in doing that, we teach them how to be better versions of themselves in the world and in relationship to other people. We become resilient and thoughtful members of our Jewish communities when we join together to read Jewish texts closely, staying open to their many possible meanings and interpretations. The Torah Studio teaches people the practice of looking at these pieces of textual art closely and slowly, and how to ground their interpretation in communal discourse and meaning making. We've seen this practice give learners confidence in themselves as Jews, give them a confident voice in their communities, and make them stakeholders of the Jewish future. This kind of teaching is the through line between Torah Studio courses, regardless of which texts, which teachers, which approaches and orientations to text we take. So how do we make that happen every time?

Joshua Ben Perahiah used to say, Appoint for yourself a teacher,
acquire for yourself a companion, and judge all favorably.
Pirkei Avot 1:6

The heart of our text study practice is communal meaning making. Every Torah Studio class gives significant time to Hevruta, the practice of partnered learning, and to Community Discussion. I believe this pairing of practices makes our learning process uniquely Jewish. Hevruta study is a classic Jewish text study practice, but more importantly, it reminds us that Jewish meaning making doesn't happen alone. Torah Studio classes give at least 20 minutes to Hevruta time so every learner has the time and space they need to feel that they personally know the text when they enter our discussion. The communal aspect of Hevruta pushes each learner

deeper into a mindset of growth and keeps them open to surprise (Eisner, 2002). A learner in a pair needs to explain their ideas out loud and work with the ideas of others. Hevrutas are not required to agree with each other, in fact disagreement tends to strengthen interpretations and teaches readers to hold space for many perspectives and possibilities (Holzer & Kent, 2013, p. 55). In Hevruta, learners have direct personal experiences with Torah, but also build relationships with the person they learn with, and ultimately build an interpersonal relationship with Torah that is resilient and multidimensional.

Each Torah Studio class follows Hevruta with Community Discussion. The triangle of Text, Self, and Other built in Hevruta (Holtzer & Kent, 2013, p.55) is expanded beyond a private conversation into the public and the communal. Jewish meaning making, the kind that brings light and joy into the world, requires the engagement of the community. Even laws decided by ancient Rabbis were required to pass the test of “feasibility” in their communities (Berkovits, 1983, p.3). If laws expounded from Torah ask us to ignore our needs or our reality, the community can use their collective action and learning as power to show that current interpretations need to change. This kind of change only comes into being when we join in community spaces to learn, challenge, and reinterpret together. That’s where the magic happens. Within a Hevruta pair, our imaginations are opened, texts are processed and understood, and interpretation begins. But in community discussion, the possibilities expand exponentially with each learner who shares their Torah, and the interpretations that come from this group take on the potential to change and nourish our Jewish communities.

To make Hevruta and Community Discussion as fruitful as it can be, Torah Studio classrooms must ensure learners have a sense of open opportunity and group safety. Torah Studio teachers create a classroom space that gives every learner who wants it the space to open up their minds to new possibilities and share new ideas safely. Community Britot (agreements) set the stage before learners enter the Zoom room, each with no more than 23 other students which means learners will always be seen and heard. Teachers greet every student as they pop in and get to know them in emails and one-on-one meetings, because learners deserve to know that their teacher cares about them as a person beyond what they might say one day. Most importantly, Torah Studio teachers model the openness we seek by guiding student interest in discussion rather than teaching their own interpretations and agendas in lectures. Teachers model in real time what it looks like to change your interpretation with new information when they raise up learner ideas in discussion and share why their own interpretations are growing. Learners feel more confident to share new ideas because they know their teacher will support their endeavor with encouragement and care. This all works because the true goal of a Torah Studio class is to be in the practice of Torah learning and meaning making together.

The skills taught in a Torah Studio class are all in service of giving learners the feeling of ownership over their own Torah Study practice. Each class will approach the skills and tools differently depending on their stated goals, but what tools are being considered remain the same. All classes consider language and translation choices carefully. When it comes to text languages, we know the incredible joy and worth of reading a text in its original language, but we believe firmly that a lack of Hebrew knowledge is no barrier to meaning making. Depending on the course goals, this might look like a thoughtfully translated piece by the instructor, offering

several translation options, or sharing a hint sheet for translating the original, all in addition to having access to the original text. The same kind of consideration is given to the names and gendered pronouns chosen for God in translation. We try to keep individual classes focused on smaller sections of text (around 20 verses or fewer) so that learners are not overloaded with content and can really focus on connecting deeply into one text. We seek to offer the content in ways that learners with a variety of different preferences, habits, and learning needs can work to their needs and strengths in class. Regardless of what text is being taught, all Torah Studio classes think deeply about the tools we give to our learners, and how they will strengthen their practice and confidence.

The question was asked of them: Is study greater or is action greater?
 Rabbi Tarfon answered and said, Action is greater. Rabbi Akiva
 answered and said, Study is greater. Everyone answered and said,
 Study is greater, because it leads to action.
Kiddushin 40b

Torah Studio courses spend time practicing in small sections of text, but this actually allows learners to understand their place in the bigger picture of Jewish textual discourse and community. Jewish texts are works of art. When you learn about art, you don't only look at the big picture, but rather dive into small sections, details, and ideas to help you understand the whole picture, and maybe other pictures, over time. When you focus on the use of blue in a Picasso painting, if you never move to the way the blues and other colors work together, or the way these color choices affect our emotional reaction to the painting, or the meaning of Picasso's blue period, you're missing the real magic of art (Dewey, 2005, p.85). Torah Studio courses and teachers give students the tools and practice to know how to look at the details and understand that it means something bigger for the whole picture.

These are practices that help our learners develop and engage holding multiple interpretations, challenging set or core ideas, being surprised by meaningful possibilities, and doing this all in the context of an inclusive and accessible Jewish community. These are mindsets and practices they take with them beyond the Torah Studio classroom, into their Jewish communities and into their daily lives. Torah Studio classes give them the tools to be confident in their Jewish voices, to look for and discuss the Jewish values held in our communities, to be aware of themselves as a part of a long history of learners who can now imagine a more expansive future. Empowering Torah study practices nourish the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual lives of individual Jews and therefore of our Jewish communities. The Torah Studio teachers don't just teach Jewish texts, they teach Jewish joy and resilience.



BUSINESS PLAN

Opportunity

Problem & Solution

Problem Worth Solving

Intellectual curiosity is an important part of Judaism and Jewish identity according to 56% of Jews who answered for the 2020 PewPoll². However, only 35% of those folks belong to synagogues. An intellectual spirituality could therefore be said to be an incredibly important part of Jewish spiritual life, but one that apparently is not fulfilled by traditional Jewish community institutions. Torah study, an ancient and fundamental part of Jewish life, could be the entry point for many Jews who are not currently engaged in Jewish community. And while many classes exist for Jews to learn about different aspects of Judaism, very few are accessible to brand new learners, and even fewer teach learners the tools for building and deepening that relationship with Torah. How can more Jews, especially those who have felt alienated from traditional institutions,³ begin to access the spiritual and communal tools of Torah Study?

Our Solution

Torah Studio offers a variety of weekly courses that can be accessed in long term or drop-in attendance. These courses focus on offering the tools to build text study as a practice, and create a safe and invigorating space to discuss texts and interpretations in community. Our courses also offer folks a space to build a learning community, both in class and beyond, grounded in Jewish learning. These courses are accessible to first and long time learners, often being brought together into one room. Building a relationship with Torah, and a text study practice enriches the intellectual, spiritual, and emotional lives of our learners. Doing so in community, and in spaces that highlight and empower learner voices and interpretations, offer them a sense of confidence and belonging both in our class and to the Jewish community at large.

² Pew Research Center, "Jewish Americans in 2020," <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/05/11/jewish-identity-and-belief/>

³ Marginalized American Jewish Identities Statistics from the 2020 PewPoll

- 9% of American Jews identify as part of the LGBTQ+ Community (PewPoll)
- 10% of American Jews are Jews of Color
- 17% of American Jews are Jews By Choice
- 21% of American Jews make less than \$50,000 a year
- 17% not of American Jews raised in Jewish homes

Target Market

Our Target Audience

- Age 25-40
- Little to no formal Jewish Education
- Advanced Secular Education
- Identifies as Queer
- Reconnecting to Jewish Life/Converting to Judaism
- A light engagement has been activated by online and self directed learning
 - Just beginning to seek more formal Jewish engagement
 - Limited options for spaces where they can bring their whole selves

Competition

Our biggest competition are synagogues, which offer courses to their members, and established Jewish educational centers with online programming, such as Hadar Institute, SVARA, The Melton School, The UnYeshivah, and Hartman Institute. Our programming highlights a particular segment of online, beginner friendly, financially accessible courses for and by self directed learners with marginalized identities. Below you'll find a comparison chart to a few programs that already exist and, based on information obtained through their advertising and websites, how they stack up against our key goals and segments.

	Torah Studio	Synagogues	Hadar	UnYeshivah	SVARA
Drop-In Classes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Focus on marginalized identities	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Lay-Led	Yes	No	No	Yes	Specially trained
Faculty with Marginalized Identities	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Financially Accessible	Yes	Yes*	Sliding	Sliding	Sliding
Optimized for online	Yes	Second option	Second option	Yes	Second option
International	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Non-Denominational	Yes	No	Pluralistic	Yes	Yes
Beginner Friendly	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Sometimes
All Experience levels	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Weekly Course Schedule	Yes	Maybe	No	No	No
Skills vs Content	Skills	Content	Skills Enhancement	Content & Skills	Skills

Execution

Marketing & Sales

New Student Marketing Plan

- Online Presence
 - Expanding Instagram and TikTok reach to millennial and Gen Z Jews with more educational content around the Parsha and other Jewish texts.
 - Engage with Facebook groups that promote Jewish learning.
 - Increase Newsletter reach through programming and events.
 - Continue to update website and blog for people to understand our work.
- Programming Partnerships
 - Continue hosting events and creating content with small Jewish organizations with similar missions. I.e Judaism Unbound, Jewish Zine Archive, SVARA
 - Expand connections to organizations that reach Young Adult Jews but are not mission focused on Education. i.e. Moishe House, Trybal Gatherings, NuRoots LA, One Table...
 - Connect with Jewish Leadership organizations to offer Professional Development to their educators and employees. I.e. Hillel International, Hillel's Springboard Fellowship, URJ Summer Camps...
 - Developing a local Los Angeles community, working with local queer and Jewish organizations like SIJCC, Junior Hi, NuRoots...

Goals

- Increase average class attendance from an average of 10 to 18 per class
- Sell 15+ Class Passes per course at an average of \$10
- Run 5+ courses per Quarter
- Bring in 75 new learners each Quarter, 300 new students per year.
- Create an online store to create more brand awareness and community loyalty.
- Create courses at times accessible to an international market
- Expand to working with Teens post B-Mitzvah
- Hire 3 new teachers per year with strong voices and personal networks of learners
- Create a Biblical Hebrew cohort based class for three levels of Hebrew learning (beginner, intermediate, and advanced)

Milestones & Metrics

Milestones

- Run four classes with 10 Class Passes sold per class by Fall 2022.
- Run 5+ courses per quarter by Fall 2022.
- Teach 300 students by Fall 2022.
- Run our first cohort based program for Hebrew by Fall 2023.
- Reach 500 Individual learners taught by Fall 2023.
- Create a teen program by Fall 2024.

Key Metrics

- Individual Learners Taught Overall
 - New Learners per quarter
 - Percentage of Returning learners
- Number of students per Course
- Percentage of learners who buy Class Passes
 - % who buy multiple Class Passes
- Newsletter reach and open rate
- Quarterly Course evaluations
 - Qualitative
 - Student profiles to make sure we're serving underserved communities
- Teacher evaluations by Torah Studio

Organization and Team

Overview

The Torah Studio is seeking 501C3 status as a non-profit. It was founded and is directed by Liana Wertman. An official Advisory Board will be forthcoming with fiscal sponsorship.

Team

Management Team

Liana Wertman is the founder and director of The Torah Studio. She oversees the educational direction, the staff training, and all logistics and operations for The Torah Studio. She has a BA in History from the University of Southern California, and will receive her Masters in Educational Leadership from the Rhea Hirsch School of Education at HUC-JIR Los Angeles in Spring of 2022. She has been in education since she was 15, as a Religious School TA, a camp counselor, at USC Hillel, as the Director of the Counselor in Training program for Gindling Hilltop Camp, and as Youth Director of Temple Israel of Hollywood. She has additional leadership and management experience in her time at KXSC Independent Student Radio as Intern Coordinator and as Director and General Manager. She is a graduate of the Year Program at Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies, and has participated in the HUC Summer Beit Midrash for two years.

Advisors

Dr Miriam Heller Stern

HUC Vice Provost for Educational Strategy, Director of the Rhea Hirsch School of Education, Founder of Beit HaYotzer/The Creativity Braintrust

Dr Jane Shapiro

Co-Founder of Orot Institute, prior Associate Director of the Florence Melton School, Winner of the Covenant Foundation Educators Award (2017).

Dan Libenson

Founder and Executive Director of Judaism Unbound. Co-host of Judaism Unbound and teacher at The UnYeshivah. Former director of University of Chicago Hillel, where he received the Richard M Joel Exemplar of Excellence award.

Adlai Wertman

Founding Director of the Brittingham Social Enterprise Lab at USC, David C Bonnet Professor of Social Entrepreneurship, Academic Director of the Masters of Science of Social Entrepreneurship. Prior CEO of Chrysalis.

Janet Ambrosi Wertman

Freelance Grantwriter for Nonprofits, has raised over \$37 million in grants. Novel writer. Prior corporate lawyer.

Rebecca Chess

Third Year Rabbinical Student at HUC-JIR Los Angeles, Teacher and Spiritual Mentor to The Torah Studio.

Financial Plan

Forecast

Key Assumptions

- Tuition will cover 30% of our estimated budget
- 70% of our budget will be raised through grants, funders, and individual gifts.
- Highest percent of budget is Personnel
- We should focus on individual donors and big gifts over grants.
- Additional funding will allow us to increase our programming by hiring more teachers.

Financial Benchmarks

- Raise \$100,000 in individual donors by 2024.
- Raise \$100,000 in grants by 2024
- Collect \$50,000 a year in tuition by 2025

Budget Proposal and Projections for 2022-2024

YEAR 1 - 2022		YEAR 2 - 2023		YEAR 3 - 2024	
REVENUE		REVENUE		REVENUE	
Individuals	\$55,000	Individuals	\$100,000	Individuals	\$150,000
Grants	\$30,000	Grants	\$75,000	Grants	\$100,000
Class Revenue	\$25,000	Class Revenue	\$45,000	Class Revenue	\$75,000
Yearly Revenue	110,000	Yearly Revenue	220,000	Yearly Revenue	325,000
EXPENSES		EXPENSES		EXPENSES	
1.Personnel		1.Personnel		1.Personnel	
Director	\$75,000	Director	\$78,000	Director	\$80,000
		Operations & Development	\$60,000	Operations & Development	\$62,000

2. Consultants		Communications & Outreach	\$45,000	Communications & Outreach	\$60,000
Faculty	\$20,000	Subtotal	\$175,000	Spiritual Counselor	\$25,000
3. Technology		2. Consultants		Teen Director	\$25,000
Zoom	300	Faculty	\$30,000	Subtotal	\$252,000
Internet	600	Hebrew Teacher	\$5,000		
Marketing	700	Subtotal	\$35,000	2. Consultants	
Website	400			Faculty	\$45,000
Scheduling	100	3. Technology		Hebrew Teacher	\$15,000
Subtotal	2100	Zoom	600	Subtotal	\$60,000
		Internet	600		
4. Other		Marketing	1000	3. Technology	
Office Rent	2400	Website	400	Zoom	1000
Travel	500	Scheduling	300	Internet	600
Professional Development	1500	Subtotal	2900	Marketing	1500
Meetings	500			Website	400
Subtotal	4900	4. Other		Scheduling	400
		Office Rent	2400	Subtotal	3900
Yearly Cost	97000	Travel	500		
		Professional Development	1500	4. Other	
		Meetings	500	Office Rent	5000
		Subtotal	4900	Travel	2000
				Professional Development	1500
		Yearly Cost	212800	Meetings	500
				Subtotal	9000
				Yearly Cost	324900



CAPSTONE ARTIFACTS

Interview Questions for Torah Studio Prospective Teachers

Purpose

The Torah Studio is not only a place for learners to explore texts, but seeks to be a place for new teachers to discover themselves as educators. Our methods and purpose are made clear in our Rationale, and what we expect from our teachers is in our Teacher guide, but we need to know that our educators are rooted in a teaching practice that is oriented toward empowering our learners, that they understand education as access to liberation and freedom for our learners and for our community.

Asking new teachers, new educators, to already understand or be able to articulate this pedagogy clearly would be unfair, and keep many great potential teachers out.

Prospective teachers will have access to our Pedagogy Rationale for the Studio as well as our Teaching Guide before we meet together and discuss the questions below. These questions would help us understand and evaluate their unspoken ideologies, and help them begin to articulate their teaching practices. It would allow us to evaluate if their teaching style will match our goals. It will also help with later evaluations of our teachers not only against our own standards but to meet their stated goals.

Questions

- *Orientation*: Why do you learn Jewish Texts? What does it teach you? What does it add to your life?
- *Orientation*: Why do you teach? Why do you want to teach?
- *Teaching Stance & Pedagogy*: What does empowering learning look and feel to you?
- *Teaching Stance & Pedagogy*: What do you believe is a teacher's role in a classroom?
- *Pedagogy & Practice*: How would you respond if a class isn't going as planned?
- *Orientation & Values*: What do you hope your learners will walk away with from your class?
 - After one class?
 - After an entire quarter?



Teacher Guidebook

Written for The Torah Studio

Teacher Expectations

We expect teachers to commit to the following:

- Intentionally planning the course in advance in line with Torah Studio goals and values.
- Sharing all documents with Torah Studio in advance.
- Sending class materials to Torah Studio at least 6 hours before class start time.
- Advertising actively for the course before and throughout the Quarter.
- Teaching all planned courses throughout the Quarter.
 - Helping find substitutes for missed dates.
 - Sending course materials and information to learners for last minute cancellations.
- Saving time for one-on-one meetings with learners (1 per learner with a Class Pass, and if other learners request). These meetings are paid for.
- After class communication with students.
- Bi-Monthly Torah Studio Faculty meetings & Professional Development
- Occasionally joining or participating in other Torah Studio events.

In order to help you fulfill those expectations, The Torah Studio will provide:

- One-on-one assistance in course preparation.
- Research funds
- Preparing and communicating class logistics (registration, payments, advertising, Zoom)
- Class observations and one-on-one debriefing
- Evaluation and feedback from learners and supervisor
- Professional Development team meetings to explore Torah Studio teaching practices

Teaching Values

Below are our Torah Studio Values and how we understand that to relate to our expectations for Torah Studio Teachers.

Empowered Learners

Torah Study is a lifelong practice. Torah Studio gives learners the skills and practice to take their learning beyond the classroom. We believe that every learner is able and ready to learn Torah. We guide learners to build a relationship with and interpret a text on their own from their first class.

- *How We Teach It*
 - To Empower Learners we see our work as teaching skills. These skills include close responsive reading of Torah, Hevruta (paired learning) practice, intertextual connections, deep relationships with text, and communal meaning building.
 - Teachers listen to all perspectives, get excited with their learners ideas, and share their own as options not answers.
 - Our teachers believe that every learner has important Torah to share now, and our job is to help them find it.

Authentic Relationships with Torah

Strong relationships with Torah allow Jewish people to be authentically themselves in Jewish spaces, and to learn more about themselves in the process. Our texts are beautiful, and they are messy. We cannot outright forgive or simply ignore difficult texts. We believe that when learners are allowed to honestly and openly engage with difficult texts, they will build stronger relationships with Torah.

- *How We Teach It*
 - Hevruta is an essential part of all of our classes because we believe learners need to feel connected to the text we're learning. That most often looks like one block of text rather than source sheets, shorter texts (10-20 verses), and one cohesive story.
 - Teachers hold a queer lens on Torah to challenge assumptions, systems, and create more space for all learners.
 - Torah Studio teachers create non-judgemental space for learner reactions (that don't harm other students), hear all perspectives, and model what it looks like to hold many possible interpretations.

- Teachers call learners in when they share harmful ideas, either calming and briefly in the moment, or privately - through chat or later contact, to keep this a safe space for growth for all learners.

Accessible Learning

The Torah Studio makes text study accessible in as many ways as possible. Finances, gender, sexuality, race, disability, geography and timing will not bar anyone from our text study.

- *How We Teach It*
 - Torah Studio teachers try to make their teaching accessible - not easy. This looks like sharing sources, offering multiple translations, using English or translating into English.
 - Our teachers should be open to teaching people with different ways of engaging with the text. We provide support for teachers as students with different learning needs attend their courses.
 - We are working and continually growing our ability to meet a diverse set of needs and accommodations in and out of class. Some of our regular practices include auto-captioning classes and offering large print source sheets in google docs, and offering one on one meeting times with teachers.

Communal Meaning Making

Torah learning experience is about practice not “ability”. All learners have the same ability to find meaning in the text. Regular practice and knowledge built over time help learners backup and elaborate upon their ideas. All participants are given equal consideration and appreciation, including the teacher, in all of our classes.

- *How We Teach It*
 - Our teachers are learners first, and are there to guide the class through the text. They don’t make final decisions or calls on what the meaning of the text is, or even where the discussion “needs” to go.
 - Our teachers help make connections between what learners share, helping them understand how we are all in conversation with one another.
 - The teachers hold the multiple meanings brought out in class, and

Nourishing Jewish Knowledge

Jewish texts are at the core of everyday Jewish life, and will be the core of the Jewish future. We believe that more people knowing these Jewish texts, and building deep and resilient relationships with them, will lead to a stronger and more beautiful Jewish future. We want to share that ease, access, and knowledge of Torah with as many people as possible, especially to people who have historically been kept out of Jewish institutions of learning.

- *How We Teach It*
 - Our teachers make sure everything learners need to know or read will be available in class. Teachers define Hebrew words, cite what sources are being referred to, offer background information, etc...
 - All of our teachers are also accessible by email and one on one meetings for help beyond class.

Teaching Tools & Resources

Torah Teaching Resources

[The Torah Studio's Pedagogical Rationale](#)

Torah Orientations

[Barry Holtz, "Map of Orientations To The Torah", Turn It, Turn It Again](#)

Focus: [Graphic on p.49](#)

Why? Our Parsha class takes a Reader Response Orientation, and our Tehillim class veers more toward Personalization. What guides your teaching? What outcomes are you seeking?

A Literary Approach to Jewish Texts

Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative

Cheat Sheet: [Read this review](#) or watch some of this talk.

Why? Think about how you approach Torah, and how your learners might be approaching the texts. How would this approach, that the texts are a literary whole full of potential meaning, open up your engagement with learners?

General Teaching Resources

Elliot Eisner, [10 Lessons The Arts Teach](#)

Universal Design for Learning

Cheat Sheet: [The UDL Guidelines and Reasoning](#)

Why? When we prepare our lessons for a wide variety of learners and learning needs in our classes, we can create options that support and empower more folks in our Zooms.

Discussion Leading Resources

Steven Brookfield

Expectations for Preparation

Here are the expectations for your pre-class preparation. Both the format and the goals have been included so you understand what we're looking for, or in case you're feeling stuck with the specific format and want to meet those goals in another way.

- 1. Overall Text/Theme choice**
 - a. This will have happened before you got this booklet!
- 2. Direction & Orientation**
 - a. Have 2-3 Essential Questions written out for your course.
 - b. Understand your orientation to teaching Torah and how that will influence class.
- 3. Scope and Sequence**
 - a. To know what texts/themes you'll be teaching in each week of your course.
 - b. To be able to imagine the flow of the texts being taught.
- 4. Central Lesson Plan**
 - a. To plan what would be happening in each course.
 - b. To prepare your materials for the upcoming quarter accurately.
 - c. To imagine new ways to engage learners to meet your goals beyond the sample lesson plan.

What are Essential Questions?

Essential Questions are the questions that guide our learning and teaching before we even get into the classroom. These are questions that have no one final answer, that are not probing for facts, but instead lead us to even more questions. These questions put us in dialogue with our subject and our learners. And when we apply them to our lesson planning, they get to the heart of what we're trying to share with our learners, and are specific to the content we're teaching. The Torah Studio uses Essential Questions to make decisions about our own classes as well.

The Torah Studio • Essential Questions

- What does Torah mean to me?
- How do we honor texts we disagree with while still honoring our own values?
- How do we have an honest dialogue with a text that cannot respond?
- How does community discussion shape and inform our own understandings and interpretations?

Style Guide

Style Guide

- ☐ [Torah Studio Logos](#)
- ☐ English Font Preferences: Lora, Montserrat, Poppins, Roboto, Times New Roman
- ☐ Hebrew Font: Times New Roman

Hevruta Packet Check-list

- ☐ Logo
- ☐ Name of the text being studied
- ☐ Step by step guide through their Hevruta time
 - ☐ How to begin
 - ☐ How you'd like them to read the text
 - ☐ Thematic/discussion questions you'd like them to consider
- ☐ Link to the text packet or the text itself
- ☐ "How to" Hevruta Guide (see sample)
- ☐ Additional Information/Guides as needed for your class
- ☐ Sharable link to send to learners (comment only)
- ☐ If using Torah Studio Grouping - [Slides accessible here](#)

Text Packet Checklist

- ☐ Title Text Being Studied
- ☐ Hebrew of text on first page - with verse numbers if applicable
- ☐ Two Translations after - with verse numbers if applicable
 - ☐ JPS & Koren/Metsudah preference
 - ☐ Make sure you identify each translation
 - ☐ Share side by side in a table
 - ☐ If you want to share only one translation, please check the translation yourself and make updates.
 - ☐ Please make sure you share where you got the base text.
- ☐ Non-Gendered names for God preferred: God, HaShem, written out in Hebrew
- ☐ Pronouns choices for God should reflect class goals (Discuss with Liana)

Examples

Lesson Plans:

- [Sample Format for Torah Studio Lesson Plans](#)
- Weekly Torah Portion Lesson
- [Tehillim Lesson Plan](#)

Hevruta Packets:

- [Example of Hevruta Packet • Weekly Torah Study](#)
- [Example of Text Packet • Weekly Torah Study](#)
- [Example of Text Packet • Tehillim](#)

Teaching Artifacts

- [Wrap up of Fall Quarter Book of Genesis 5782](#)
- [Padlet from WTF Is The Talmud](#)

Taste of Torah Studio

The Torah Studio runs a variety of online courses each Quarter. Below is a QR code to watch a compilation of clips from Winter Quarter 5782. This video attempts to give a little bit of a taste of how it feels to be in a Torah Studio class.

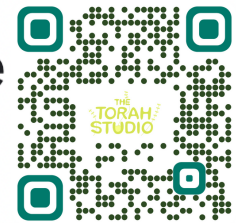
The teachers and courses included in this video are:

- Liana Wertman, Weekly Parsha Study Course
- Lexi Kohanski, Weekly Psalms Class
- Chava Shapiro, WTF Is The Talmud?!





Winter 5782 • Torah Studio Course Feedback



We're sending you this form if you've taken a Torah Studio class during our Winter Quarter!

You can answer as many or a few of the questions as you'd like. Even if you've only attended once, we'd love to head from you. Your feedback will help us make sure our programming is as accessible and inclusive as possible and is growing with us and with you,

This first page asks for some information about you so we can better show who are learning with and how far reaching our program is!

Name

Your answer

Pronouns

- ☐ They/them
- ☐ She/her
- ☐ He/Him
- ☐ They/she
- ☐ They/he
- ☐ Other: _____

Where are you located?

Your answer

Age?

Your answer

What are some identities that you bring with you into our classes? (e.g: queer, Sephardi, trans, converted to Judaism, yiddishist, activist, cat-lover...)

Your answer

What made you want to learn at The Torah Studio?

Your answer

What areas do you feel this course has helped you develop in?

- ☐ Close Reading
- ☐ Hebrew decoding or translating
- ☐ Intertextual connections
- ☐ Confidence in speaking about Jewish texts
- ☐ Jewish Practice
- ☐ Holding multiple interpretations/perspectives
- ☐ Other: _____

How do you use the solo time?

Your answer

Learning Psalms has affected my life/Jewish life Intellectually

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much

Learning Psalms has affected my life/Jewish life Spiritually

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very Much

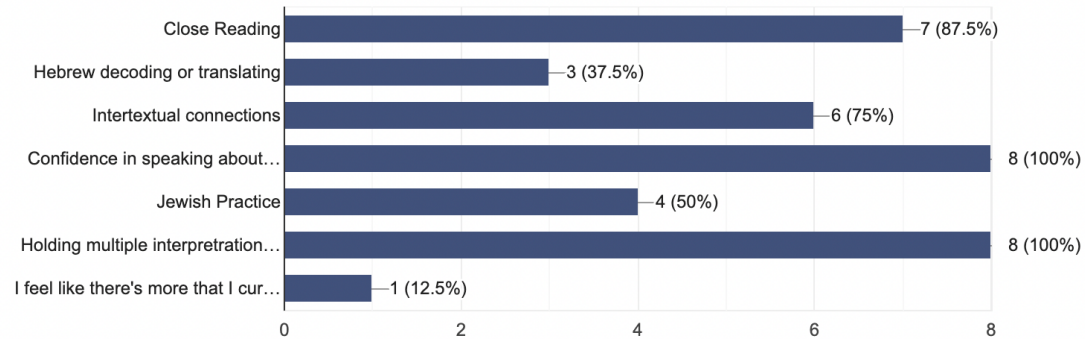
Learning Psalms has affected my life/Jewish life Emotionally

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very Much

What areas do you feel this course has helped you develop in?



8 responses



Elaborate on your above responses

8 responses

I am in love with Torah and feel more knowledgeable about Judaism

Attending classes has been an absolute highlight of my week. It has been so nice to join such a welcoming group of folks looking to see this text and these stories in new ways.

The Torah Studio's parsha study has wildly and beautifully expanded my access to both Torah and good torah with others who are much more like me than some of the group makeup for me locally and I am so, SO grateful to be able to journey through Torah with the kind of expansiveness and openness that is prioritized on Wednesday nights.

It's been another way of connecting these three aspects. One of the many things I appreciate about Judaism that it speaks to all three aspects: intellectual, emotional, and spiritual. But being the person I am, from the very beginning, my challenge has been moving past the heavily intellectual approaches to everything. Studying Torah has been one of the ways of finding more balance.

Throughout my time studying Torah with the Torah studio, I have developed a relationship with Torah for the first time. I feel like I am beginning to speak with confidence about what I think and believe, and have a newfound appreciation and connection to our tradition.

What has been a highlight of this course?

7 responses

Feeling connected to other Jewish people.

Having people who I have now been learning alongside for a while, making friends

The new lens through which to interpret text

Book of Exodus. Havrutah with your grandmother-- like me, she likes the nit-picky details and her emotional responses.

being able to chat with the same/similar group -- seeing how people's opinion evolve and just getting to know folks

Meeting so many amazing chevruta partners and having some really amazing conversations

Honestly, yesterday's class & the ways we brought together Torah study & conversations about the pandemic. Real bummer I had to leave early for that one!



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