

# SILICON VALLEY BEIT MIDRASH

## WINTER LEARNING SEMINAR 2015

### - Course Schedule -

	Sunday, December 20	Monday, December 21	Tuesday, December 22
10:00 AM - 12:30 PM	<b>- Sunday Morning Welcome*</b> <b>The Best Student I Ever Had</b> – Inter./Adv. Talmud – Yaffa Epstein <b>Thinking Like A Rabbi</b> – Introductory Talmud – Jonah Hassenfeld		
12:30-1:30 PM	<b>Lunch</b>		
1:30-3:30 PM	<b>Depression and Love: A Personal and Textual Story</b> – David Booth <b>“In G-d's Image”</b> : Which One? – Ziva Hassenfeld		
3:30-3:45 PM	<b>Break</b>		
3:45-5:45 PM	<b>Who Me? Rabbinic Moments of Self Consciousness</b> – Yaffa Epstein		
	<b>6 PM: Dinner</b> <b>7 PM: Community Lecture</b> <b>with Yaffa Epstein (Optional)</b>		<b>5:45 PM: Closing Circle</b>

**\*Sunday Morning Welcome: On Sunday morning, December 20, we will meet at 9:30 AM to have a short introduction to the program.**

## **Class Descriptions:**

### **The Best Student I Ever Had: The Rabbinic Approach to Education (Inter./Adv. Talmud)**

*With Rabba Yaffa Epstein*

The Babylonian Talmud is all about the pursuit of knowledge and understanding. But, what exactly is knowledge according to the Rabbis? What content makes the cut? And perhaps more important who makes the rules about learning? Come examine 3 intensive pages of Tractate Eruvin, where we will see these questions - and many more - explored and debated.

### **Thinking Like A Rabbi (Introductory Talmud)**

*With Jonah Hassenfeld*

The Rabbis of the Talmud didn't think about the world quite like we do. They used their own values, experiences, and styles of reasoning to make sense of the world around them. These differences can sometimes make the text of the Talmud feel irrelevant for a modern audience. In this class, we will engage a diverse selection of Talmudic texts with an eye to the questions: what were Rabbis of the Talmud trying to do? What was their project? Working in translation, students will strive to unravel this dense and elliptical text. Throughout the course, we will get inside the heads of the Talmudic Rabbis, and hopefully, make the text seem a little less foreign and a little more relevant.

### ***“In G-d's Image”*: Which One?**

*With Ziva Hassenfeld*

We are all created "*Betzelem Elokim*," in the "Image of God," (Genesis 2:27). But what is this “image of God” exactly? Is it the personal God of Genesis? The powerful, warring God of Exodus? The punishing God of Numbers? While the question of the biblical image of God and its relation to our modern Jewish theology has been a topic of reflection in much Jewish philosophical writing, it is also a question that can be explored through the biblical text itself. In this class we will look at three sets of biblical texts: God in creation, God in Egypt, and God in the desert. Together we will explore the multiple sides of the biblical God and answer for ourselves whether we find the biblical image of God still relevant.

## **Depression and Love: A Personal and Textual Story**

*With Rabbi David Booth*

Depression is the unremarked epidemic of our era. Rarely do we confront its harsh effects, and more rarely do we explore Jewish texts for insight and help both to those suffering from mental illness and those caring for loved ones. We will look at two Biblical stories as well as a selection from the Tanya, to gain some insight into the Biblical and Hasidic views of depression. Finally, we will explore the concept of *Hesed* (overflowing love), as one key response to the sadness and pain of depression. Throughout this class we will weave in our own stories as we connect Jewish wisdom to our own experience.

## **Who Me? Rabbinic Moments of Self Consciousness**

*With Rabba Yaffa Epstein*

There are several stories in the Talmud where the Rabbis talk about themselves, and their positions as Rabbis and Leaders of Communities. We will examine the kinds of self-critique, as well as self aggrandizement, the Rabbis utilize, and attempt to understand both how the Rabbis perceived themselves, and how that self-perception can inform our own relationship with Rabbinic Judaism.