

The Bronfman Fellowship Summer 2017 Shiurim Topics

During the summer, most mornings begin with shiurim in small groups with a faculty member. Members of the faculty teach a shiur, a seminar course of their own design (five sessions, 75 minutes each). Groups of Fellows are reconfigured each rotation. Study is interactive, requiring the participation of teacher and student. All texts are available in the original language, with English translation.

The Chain is Unbroken: Israeli Literature as Commentary on Challenging Topics in Biblical and Rabbinic Literature | Rabbi Dahlia Kronish

The goal of this course is to explore the ways in which modern Israeli literature sheds light, problematizes, and expands on questions that have been at the core of Jewish discourse for millennia. We will begin our exploration with modern Hebrew poetry that will instill within us an understanding of the role of sacrifice within Israeli society and the relationship between that sacrifice and the legacy that Abraham bequeathed us even as he did not actualize the potential sacrificing of his son. We will look to a rabbinic autobiography to explore questions of theodicy –specifically thinking about where God was during some of Israel’s most challenging battles, and what it means to understand suffering as a symbol of God’s love. And, we will challenge the biblical understanding of perfection and consider the complications of building a society that is diverse. Our guiding question will be: how can we understand contemporary Israeli literature as yet another link in our chain of tradition?

Autonomy and Obligation | Professor Jon Levisohn

Some of us operate with the assumption that autonomy, choice, setting one’s own path in the world, is central to human flourishing. Those folks may have a hard time with the idea of obligation. Some of us, on the other hand, operate with the assumption that accepting obligations, submitting to what someone (or Someone) else asks of us, is the noblest way to live. Those folks may have a hard time with the idea of autonomy. We will study texts from the Tanakh, from the rabbinic tradition, from philosophy, and from modern Jewish thought, to help us make sense of the tension between autonomy and obligation, and to begin to envision ways that we might embrace both.

Justice: Five Ways of Thinking About What Makes Something Right Rabbi Yehuda Sarna

Is there a distinctly Jewish idea of justice? How is it determined? With what authority is it administered? What are its broader implications? In an increasingly complex moral universe, we embrace the challenging of applying our intuitive moral frameworks to many different cultures and civilizations now in plain and immediate view to us. This course explores five stations in Jewish legal, moral and philosophical development to more deeply understand some fundamental notions of justice. We seek both to problematize simplistic understandings, and apply more nuanced approaches to contemporary moral and political issues.