

Oren – A Program for Training Jewish Teachers in the Diaspora

Please note: Dates, events and content are subject to change

Jewish Day School teachers shape the future of Jewish life around the world. The Oren Program at Oranim Academic College, one of Israel's leading colleges for teacher education and supported by the Israeli Ministries of Education and Diaspora Affairs, invites educators to deepen their knowledge, renew their teaching practice, and reconnect with Israel as a living source of Jewish learning.

Join a dynamic learning community and discover new tools, approaches, and experiences to enrich your teaching!

The program is comprised of three components: Two semesters of online courses, a three-week, Israel-based study program, and a teacher training practicum. The program combines essential academic studies in particular disciplines with the training to teach those disciplines. The teacher training practicum is based on the clinical approach employed at the Oranim College of Education and elsewhere around the world. The training is anchored in field experience, with pedagogy and didactic knowledge structured around that experience. We will emphasize professional identity, teaching quality, and the professional responsibility of teachers. The training focuses, among other aspects, on developing awareness of cultural, emotional, and cognitive differences, and on developing a personal worldview regarding differences and equality in the classroom and in the school.

Educational approach

In the area of didactics and pedagogy, we focus primarily on methods and tools for teaching subject matter:

- *Meaningful Learning* -Emphasis on developing intellectual, creative, and independent learning skills. Meaningful learning encourages social responsibility



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- and enriches the experience of the learner. Students raise questions, locate sources of information, and create relevant new knowledge for their personal life and life in a digital world.
- *Active and interactive teaching* - Varied methods to encourage active learner engagement, to enhance efficacy of teaching and learning, to help learners internalize and apply what they learned, and to shift the emphasis from *what the teacher is teaching* to *what the student is learning*.
- *Teaching technology* – Getting to know and try out applications that make learning more effective. We will explore how intelligent use of technology enables us to evaluate learning; to make learning more effective, experiential, and varied; and to inspire curiosity in both learners and teachers.

Program Goals

- Deepen teachers' knowledge in key areas of Jewish studies
- Provide innovative pedagogical tools for teaching Jewish subjects, including technology-enhanced learning, interactive approaches, inclusive teaching, and learner-centered experiential methods
- Engage educators in a meaningful personal and professional Jewish journey

Target audience

The program is deliberately designed as a broad and inclusive framework, recognizing the diversity of motivations, identities, and educational philosophies among educators in Jewish settings. Rooted in a deep commitment to the pluralistic nature of contemporary Jewish education in the Diaspora, it embraces multiple voices, traditions, and perspectives. By spanning core domains of Jewish knowledge and pedagogy, the program enables each participant to find personal and professional relevance while building a strong, confident, and adaptable teaching foundation.



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It is intended for

- Teachers (Jewish and non-Jewish) currently working in Jewish Day Schools worldwide
- Teachers who have secured a teaching position in a Jewish Day School for at least Three years
- Experienced teachers seeking to deepen their knowledge and explore innovative teaching methods

Program structure

A three-semester program totaling 900 academic hours, combining:

1. Online Academic Courses

Academic-level courses taught by Oranim faculty in Bible (Tanach), Rabbinic Literature, Jewish History, Jewish Philosophy, Israel Studies, Hebrew, Jewish Leadership, and Innovative Pedagogies. ***See Appendix 1: Abstracts of the Courses in the Oren Program***

2. Israel - based study - Experiential Seminar in Israel

The Israel Seminar is dedicated to the study of the Land and State of Israel, including familiarity with the country and its multi-cultural society, successes, and challenges. The Seminar will combine tours, courses and meetings with lecturers, intellectuals, and cultural figures from a variety of backgrounds and ethnicities, as well as direct meetings with Israeli educators.

The program during the summer seminar will include three components:

- In-depth study: Hebrew as a second language Part II, Jewish history of modern times – part II, familiarization with Israeli society, its successes and challenges, pedagogical methods and tools for teaching Jewish subjects, and face to face meetings with the instructors of the online courses.



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- Tours in Israel focusing on the following topics: History of the Land of Israel, from Holocaust to revival, multiculturalism in Israel, the State of Israel and its borders, renewal of the Israeli people in the Galilee after the Holocaust.
- Meetings with lecturers and educators, cultural events that expose the participants to the richness of Jewish and Israeli culture and creativity.

3. Teaching Practicum

The practicum involves four weekly hours of teaching practice, alongside Zoom mentoring sessions focused on improving instructional methods and discussing challenges and dilemmas in teaching.

Each participant receives **ongoing professional mentoring**, including:

- Individual guidance from experienced educators
- Support in applying to learning directly in their classroom
- Reflection on teaching challenges and dilemmas
- Feedback on lesson planning and implementation
- Development of professional and Jewish educator identity

The practicum follows a **clinical, field-based model**, grounded in:

- Real classroom experience
- Reflective practice
- Action research (identify → reflect → adapt → apply)

Mentoring ensures that learning is **practical, relevant, and transformative**.



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Admission Process

Interview and recommendations required.

Tuition

The program is highly subsidized by the Israeli Ministries of Education and Diaspora Affairs. **Participants pay only 3,038 NIS.**

[Click here and fill out the short interest form](#)

Contact Us:

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Appendix 1: Abstracts of the Courses in the Oren Program

First Semester

Six asynchronous online courses + Teaching Practicum

1. Teaching Jewish Prayer

Lecturer: Dr. Avi Kadish

The *Siddur* (Jewish Prayer Book) is an amalgam of attitudes and texts whose origins range from close to the dawn of human history to this very day. In this course we will study Jewish prayer as it changed and evolved over time, yet retained its coherence all the way from the Bible (Tanach) to the rabbis of the Midrash and Talmud, through the Middle Ages and into modern times. We will especially deal with the tensions and contradictions within prayer itself, which make it both an educational challenge and opportunity at the same time: Spontaneity versus formality, personal versus communal, tradition versus innovation. Together we will model these ideas, tensions, and contradictions in ways that are understandable and useful to our students.

Topics:

- Biblical Prayer
- Rabbinic Prayer
- Prayer as an Idea in the Bible and the Talmud
- Prayer as Philosophy or *Kabbalah*
- Formality versus Spontaneity in Jewish Prayer
- Is it really possible to pray in a synagogue?
- How the Siddur Developed over Time
- Prayers of the Jewish Holidays: The Basics
- Prayer in the Modern Jewish Movements

2. Jewish Holidays – Between Content and Ceremonies

Lecturer: Elisabeth Goldwyn, PhD

We will study the cycle of the Jewish year with its holidays and days of memory, their ideas and principles, and their evolution over time. We will also learn about the symbols and ceremonies of each holiday, their meaning and relevance to our celebrations. We will think together what might be relevant for today.

I hope to be able to model for you the ways of working with holidays as educational opportunities, in order for you to be able to continue this process by yourselves.

Topics:

- Ceremonies between form and content
- Introduction to the Jewish calendar
- Tradition and renewal
- Case studies: Pessah, Yom Haatsmaut, Shavuot

3. Pedagogy of Teaching Jewish and Israeli Culture in the Diaspora

Lecturer: Lori Abramson, MAJE

Jewish and Israeli culture are not just "nice things" to spice up the classroom experience; rather, they are critical to our identities and lives as Jews. In this course, we will discuss how to bring Jewish and Israeli culture to our students, classrooms, and schools. We will define culture according to various disciplines, and delve into the connection between culture, personal, group, and communal identity. We will discuss its impact on our students' Jewish identity and sense of Jewish Peoplehood. This content of this course will provide key pedagogic skills, including lesson planning from rationale to assessment, as well as integrating technology in lessons. Finally, together we will develop a bank of cultural resources (language, music, dance, art,

poetry and stories, theatre, movies and TV, humour, and food) that students can draw from during and after the course.

Topics:

- Teaching culture as a basis for Jewish identity in the Diaspora
- Definitions of culture, enculturation, acculturation, indoctrination, cultural transmission
- Jewish cultural capital, Jewish Peoplehood, and Cultural Zionism, and their relationship to Jewish identity
- Roles of personal, group and social/communal identity within culture
- Culture and multiple intelligences
- Lesson planning from start to finish
- Technological, pedagogical tools for teaching and learning

4.Studying and Teaching Torah

Lecturer: Rabbi Dr. Iris Yaniv

In this course we will study and teach important and well-known texts from the Torah using the eight orientations we learned last semester. Every two weeks I will upload a short video (up to 30 minutes) in which I will teach a text from the Torah, each time according to one (or more) of the orientations. I hope that at the end of the course you will be able reflect on your teaching so that you can make conscious decisions about how you want to teach Torah.

Topics:

- The Contextual Orientation
- The Literary Criticism Orientation
- Parshanut: The Jewish Interpretive Orientation
- Moralistic Didactic Orientation
- Personalization
- The Ideational Orientation

- The Bible Leads to Action Orientation
- The Decoding and Translation Orientation

5. Jewish History, Part I

Lecturer: Dr. Hagay Dvir

Jewish history sits at an important junction in Jewish Day School education, bringing together the worlds of Judaic and general studies. It focuses on the ways that Jews have lived and found their meaning in Judaism, while it utilizes tools and texts of a secular discipline. Apparently, and not always aligned with its crucial role in modeling and shaping Jewish identity, the study of Jewish history in Jewish day schools has sometimes been considered inferior to the Big-3 (Ivrit, Tanach and Rabbinics). When teaching Jewish history, we would like to make history relevant to our students and help them connect history with their own lives. It is sometimes a challenge to integrate a search for meaning with a critical thinking. The 21st century post-everything age adds additional challenges, e.g., data boom and the changing nature of Jewish identification.

In this course, our aim is to deal with both the What and How questions, taking a two-fold path:

- **WHAT:** We will go over the key chapters of Jewish history, from Antiquity (1st and 2nd temple, Mishnah and Talmud periods), through Middle Ages and Jewish life and challenges in the Diaspora, up to modern times and the State of Israel. In this fall semester, we will aim to cover Part I: Antiquity (from Bible to Mishnah and Talmud)
- **HOW:** In parallel, we will discuss various questions related to Jewish history and our lives (such as Jewish history and Jewish memory, Jewish-Christian relations, the role of a Jewish community and more) and the challenges and practice of teaching the various chapters of Jewish history.

Topics:

- Who needs Jewish history?
- Jewish memory and Jewish history
- The Bible as historical source
- The settlement of ancient Israel
- The United Monarchy
- The Divided Monarchy
- The Babylonian Exile
- The Persian Period
- The Maccabees
- King Herod
- Birth of Christianity
- The Great Revolt
- Bar Kochba Revolt
- Post-Temple Judaism
- Jewish Women in Antiquity

6. Hebrew as a Second Language – Part I

Lecturer: Michal Even

In the course we will deal with the teaching of Hebrew as a second language for language learners in Israel and Diaspora Jewry, and we will learn the principles of teaching the Hebrew language. We will focus on culture-oriented teaching and combining arts: visual arts, plastic arts, songs, videos and movement.

Due to gaps in Hebrew levels, each session will be divided into two parts. One part will be intended for beginners who do not know the language and will deal with the study of the Hebrew language. The second part is intended for speakers of the Hebrew language and will deal with how to teach Hebrew as a second language.

Topics:

- Arts and Bibliotherapy in Response to Different Learning Styles

- Teaching grammar as a means of acquiring language
- Techniques in building listening skills: songs and dialogues
- Learning through games
- Vocabulary acquisition
- Reading and reading comprehension: Strategies for teaching reading and using texts
- Storytelling
- Spelling
- Writing

Teaching Practicum (in your own school with online pedagogical supervision from Oranim)

Mentor: DR. Rachel Ravid , Lori Abramson, MAJE – Part I

The practicum program will be based on Oranim's innovative academy-field partnership model, emphasizing inclusion, social and emotional learning (SEL), and meaningful relationships between teachers and students, as well as group learning. A pedagogical mentor will provide guidance to each participant throughout the process of teaching in the field, by raising issues and challenges in daily educational work, and constructing a strategic process for handling and managing the challenges. Guidance will be provided on several levels: subject matter content; Jewish identity; professional identity; language ability; and interpersonal, emotional and cognitive differences. Guidance and supervision will be based on the principles of Action Research: identifying a problem, researching and discussing the issue, constructing a reflective investigation, and applying insights through an ongoing iterative process.

Second Semester

Six asynchronous online courses + Teaching Practicum

1. Jewish Holidays – Between content and ceremonies - Part II

Lecturer: Elisabeth Goldwyn, PhD

For description, see Semester 1 above.

2. Ways of Teaching the Hebrew Bible

Lecturer: Rabbi Dr. Iris Yaniv

In this course we will ask ourselves several important questions about teaching Tanach. First, what is the name of the book that we are teaching? Is it Tanach, Hebrew Bible, Old Testament? Second, do we teach it in English, Hebrew or another language? And the central question: Why do we teach this book? Why is it so important to us? What do we want our students to gain from studying it? After dealing with these questions, we will discuss ways of teaching Tanach and some common pedagogical dilemmas. I hope that at the end of the course you will be able to reflect on your teaching so that you can make conscious decisions about how you want to teach Tanach.

Topics:

- What is the name of the book we are teaching?
- In what language do we teach it?
- Approaches for teaching Tanach
- Using art in teaching Tanach
- Using archeology in teaching Tanach
- Moral gaps between us and the Tanach



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3. How We Learn Rabbinic Literature

Lecturer: Dr. Avi Kadish

The “Oral Torah” is central to the Jewish tradition. Throughout the vast period of Jewish exile, from the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE until the French Revolution (1789), the Oral Torah was in fact the defining feature of the Jewish tradition. At its core the Oral Torah continues, expands and deepens the biblical tradition, but at times it also seems to challenge that tradition or even change it. The Oral Torah was part of the oral culture of ancient times, a world in which vast realms of human knowledge were transmitted from generation to generation through oral teaching. Only much later, in the Middle Ages, was the rabbinic corpus gradually committed to writing. It is only then that we can begin to speak of a vast and growing “Jewish bookshelf” and of compilations of the Oral Torah as “Rabbinic Literature.”

The Oral Torah also reflects a culture of discussion and debate: To participate in it means to be part of a discussion or an argument. In its earlier stages, these discussions were based on the biblical text. This is called *midrash*, which means that the verses of the bible contain infinite divine meaning, including renewed relevance in every new age, and it is up to us to seek out those infinite meanings. *Midrash* includes two related realms: (1) *Halakhah*, which seeks to understand how God wants people to act. (2) *Aggadah*, which describes the actions and feelings of God throughout history and how God relates to humanity. But over time practicality triumphed, and later the midrashic traditions about *halakhah* were organized independently according to topic (rather than together with the biblical verses), so that people could learn what they need to do in an organized fashion. This organization of *halakhah* is called *Mishnah*, and the continued discussion of the *Mishnah* in subsequent generations is called *Gemara*. *Mishnah* and *Gemara* together are called *Talmud*. *Gemara* was conducted in the study halls of two great rabbinic centers, in the Land of Israel and in Babylonia, and thus there are two Talmuds: The

“Jerusalem Talmud” (i.e. the Talmud of the Land of Israel) and the Babylonian Talmud.

In this course we will study representative samples of all these forms of learning, emphasizing their oral nature throughout. We will learn how to read them, how to understand them, and how to engage them as part of a conversation that continues through the generations to this very day. All these encounters will also be models for how to teach them. The students will gain not just familiarity with the texts but also become familiar with the vast resources that are available for learning them and teaching them.

Topics:

- Introductory classes: Initial examples of *Midrash Aggadah*
- The Orality of the Oral Torah
- The Oral Torah as an activity: *Miqra, Targum, Midrash, Mishnah, Talmud (Gemara)*
- *Midrash Halakhah*
- From Midrash to Mishnah
- The Two Talmuds: Halakhic example and comparison
- *Aggadah* in the two Talmuds
- Resources for the study and teaching of the Oral Torah

4. Educating for Jewish Peoplehood

Lecturer: Lori Abramson, MAJE

These days, as human beings, we tend to look at everything that divides us; but as Jews, we are taught to think of ourselves as one people. How can we teach our students about the unity of the Jewish people in a world increasingly fragmented by religious or non-religious outlooks, politics, values, and ideologies? By helping them to develop personal relationships with Israel, Israelis, and with students in other parts of the world through the concept of Jewish Peoplehood. Jewish Peoplehood cuts across all divisions, often expressed as Israel-Diaspora, religious-secular, left-

right. When we speak the language of Jewish Peoplehood, we gain a "glocal" perspective – both global and local. On a local and personal level, Jewish Peoplehood enables us to talk about our Jewish identities, our similarities and differences, and our daily lives as Jews, and to connect through our interests, hobbies and personalities. On a global level, Jewish Peoplehood helps us to extrapolate from the personal relationships we have cultivated to feeling a sense of belonging and obligation to the Jewish people as a whole.

In this course, we will start from the very basic premise that you cannot do Jewish Peoplehood by yourself! First, we will do Jewish Peoplehood together. We'll define what it means, and we will learn a model for educating through "dimensions of Jewish Peoplehood." Using various practical tools, we will examine our Jewish identities and our attitudes and beliefs about the Jewish people in the Diaspora and in Israel, and we will teach each other about Jewish ways of life in our different countries. We will have at least one mifgash (facilitated meeting) with Israeli education students. Finally, we will divide into pairs (from different countries), and we will connect with our students so that they can experience it too. Throughout the course we will experiment with various pedagogic and technological tools for collaboration – which, as we know, are necessary to overcome time differences.

Topics:

- Educating for Jewish peoplehood – definitions and dimensions
- Narratives and Identity
- Mifgash as a tool for building Jewish peoplehood
- Educating for JP: Collective belonging, collective responsibility, Jewish capital, interpersonal attachment
- Issues that unite us and issues that divide us
- Israel and Zionism: Understanding history, connecting with Israel and Israelis, how to speak with our students about the wonder and the challenge
- Exploring Jewish communities around the world



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5. Teaching Jewish Philosophy

Lecturer: Dr. Avi Kadish

What is God? What is Israel? What is the Torah? What meaning do commandments have? How can we possibly know about these things? What should we do if logic and reason seem to contradict the tradition? What are the most reliable sources of knowing: Experience? Feeling? Tradition? Logic? Science?

Not one of these questions is new. Some of them are already implicit within the Bible and rabbinic works. And all of them have been completely explicit for at least the past one thousand years. They are central to all the great, classical works of Jewish philosophy, from its golden age in the High Middle Ages right down to our own very day.

Jewish Philosophy explores the way that Jews think about the pillars of their own heritage. It further tests the ways that Jews try to deal with the tension that arises between their own tradition and the reigning ideas within the societies in which they live. The most exciting thing about it is the vast range of positions to be found in it: There are opposite and mutually contradictory positions about nearly every topic. In other words, there are many ways to understand the Jewish tradition. Different Jews often have very different philosophies, even when they don't even realize it!

An appreciation of Jewish philosophy is crucial for any teacher who wants to give balanced feedback to students who struggle with questions like these. It is also critical for teachers who want to wake their students up and help them begin to think about the Jewish heritage in critical ways or offer them alternatives to popular understandings that they may find unsatisfying. Jewish philosophy can be taught on many different levels and in many different contexts. It touches the very heart of what it means to be Jewish in unexpected ways.

In this course we will encounter some of the classic questions and texts of Jewish philosophy. We will learn not just how to read them and understand them, but also how to engage them and argue with them as part of a conversation that continues through the generations to this very day. All these encounters will further be models for how to teach them. Students in the course will gain not just familiarity with the texts but also become familiar with online resources that are available for learning them and teaching them.

Topics:

- The Garden of Eden: An Introduction to Jewish Philosophy
- The Illuminated Fortress: A Second Introduction to Jewish Philosophy
- “A Share in the World to Come”: From Rabbinic Thought to Maimonides
- Maimonides’ Introduction to *Helek*: The Goal of Study and Action
- Maimonides’ Introduction to *Helek*: Allegorical Interpretation of the Jewish Tradition
- Maimonides’ Introduction to *Helek*: Philosophical Eschatology
- Maimonides’ Introduction to *Helek*: The Thirteen Foundations of the Torah
- Opposition to Maimonides’ Philosophy and Dogma

6. Developing Jewish Leadership through Jewish Education

Lecturer: Lori Abramson, MAJE

After two years of studying content and pedagogy in this Jewish teaching program, we will examine our own roles as Jewish educational leaders. This course will provide an opportunity to explore various theoretical and real-life models of Jewish educational leadership and to consider how they relate to our own identity and leadership style. In addition, we will bring case studies from our own schools and teaching experiences and analyze them together. Furthermore, we will develop strategies for encouraging our students' potential for leadership and for modeling leadership within the teaching and administrative staff and wider school community.

Throughout the semester, we will each develop our own personal and professional vision for the work that we do through a written "Jewish Teaching and Leadership Philosophy Statement."

This course will include two inter-related strands: one, careful consideration of selected issues presented in the literature via asynchronous, online learning; and the other, a practicum conducted synchronously on Zoom in small groups that will focus on the above-mentioned case studies and other practical matters in teacher identity and leadership.

Topics:

- Theories of leadership
- Ancient and modern models of Jewish leadership
- Defining and recognizing teachers in leadership
- The mutual impact of leadership and teacher identity
- Leadership dilemmas that impact us directly: Tools for defining, investigating, analyzing, solving them
- Managing changes in areas of school life that affect us as teachers
- Developing leadership in our students, classes and community
- Creating a 'teaching and leadership philosophy' statement

Teaching Practicum (in your own school with online pedagogical supervision from Oranim)

Mentor: Dr Rachel Ravid, Lori Abramson, MAJE – Part II

The practicum program will be based on Oranim's innovative academy-field partnership model, emphasizing inclusion, social and emotional learning (SEL), and meaningful relationships between teachers and students, as well as group learning. A pedagogical mentor will provide guidance to each participant throughout the process of teaching in the field, by raising issues and challenges in daily educational work, and constructing a strategic process for handling and managing the challenges.



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