

# Weekend of Inspiration Educators

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## Rav David Aaron



Rav David Aaron is a spiritual visionary and master educator who has invested over 3 decades delving into life's biggest question marks and sharing Torah's transformational wisdom to adults and young adults. He has emerged as the 'God expert' simply because he has dared to ask and answer the most difficult questions.

Rav David Aaron gently urges us to take a look at the self-defeating and silly notions we carry about ourselves and God. His wit lets our inner child listen while our critical mind begins to perceive a profound new world.

Rav Aaron received his rabbinic ordination for Yeshivat ITRI. He is the Dean & Founder of Isralight (an international organization and center for Jewish learning in Jerusalem's Old City) and Yeshivat Orayta.

He runs Jewish educational programs in Israel and abroad, including: Rabbinic Enrichment, Leadership Training, Executive Seminars, Retreats, Outreach Seminars and more. Rabbi Aaron has also developed educational curriculum for Jewish high schools.

## Rav Shlomo Brody

Rav Shlomo Brody who is the founding director of the Tikvah Overseas Students Institute, is a columnist for The Jerusalem Post and a presidential doctoral fellow at Bar Ilan University Law School. He previously served for a decade as a senior instructor at Yeshivat Hakotel and as a junior research fellow at the Israel Democracy Institute.

His writings on Jewish law and contemporary ethical dilemmas have appeared in prominent publications like First Things, Hakirah, The Federalist, Tablet, and Mosaic, and have been cited in Israeli Supreme Court decisions. His book, A Guide to the Complex: Contemporary Halakhic Debates (Maggid), received a 2014 National Jewish Book Award.

Rav Brody received his BA from Harvard University and MA from The Hebrew University.

He lives with his family in Modiin.



## Rabbanit Pesha Fischer



Rabbanit Pesha Fischer has been teaching Halacha and Tanach to students of all ages for the last 18 years. She has also created an after school science program for elementary age children in Modiin.

For the last 11 years she has been teaching students in gap year programs in Israel and teaching bridal classes both in Israel and abroad. She currently teaches at Midreshet Amit and Machon Maayan.

Prior to her aliyah, Rabbanit Pesha worked as a Campus Torah Educator at the University of Maryland and was Judaic studies coordinator at Yavneh Academy of Dallas.

Pesha has studied at Midreshet Lindenbaun and Matan and received a Masters degree in education from Yeshiva University.

Rabbanit Pesha lives in Modiin with her husband Rabbi Elli Fischer (the editor of Rabbi Eliezer Melamed's Peninei Halakha series in English) and their four children.

## Rav Yishai Fleisher

Rav Yishai Fleisher is an Israeli radio broadcaster and international spokesman for the Jewish community in Hebron, an Israeli radio show host, and writer. Rav Fleisher is a contributing editor at JewishPress.com and the founder and director of "Kumah" – a non-profit dedicated to strengthening Israel's global narrative through strategic communications.

When he was a child, his family moved to the United States, and he grew up in New Jersey. At the age of 17, Fleisher returned to Israel and served as a paratrooper in the Israel Defense Forces. He continues to participate in an active battlefield reserve unit.

Fleisher is featured regularly on international cable television and radio outlets such as CNN, Al Jazeera and the BBC.

In 2002, he married Malkah Bennett, who had been a classmate of his, at the Cave of the Patriarchs.

The Fleishers lived in Beit El, adjacent to Ramallah, for eight years, before moving to Eastern Jerusalem in 2011, where they currently live on the Mount of Olives with their three children.



# Rabbanit Rachelle Fraenkel



Rabbanit Rachelle Fraenkel is a Torah educator at Nishmat, The Jeanie Schottenstein Center for Advanced Torah Study for Women, and the director of Matan's Hilkhata Institute at Matan Women's Institute for Torah Studies.

She became an international speaker after her son, Naftali Fraenkel, was kidnapped and murdered along with two other Israeli teens in 2014.

She lives in Nof Ayalon, Israel, and studied at Bar Ilan University, Lindenbaum, Matan & Nishmat. She serves as a Nishmat Halakhic Advisor for families regarding the laws of niddah, and was in the first graduating class of Matan's Advanced Talmud Institute.

She was invited to speak at the United Nations Human Rights Council accompanied by the two other mothers: Bat Galim Shaer and Iris Yifrach. According to the New York Times, "She has become an international public figure, traveling to Geneva to speak to a United Nations committee, giving television interviews, meeting Israel's president and prime minister."

# Rav Binny Freedman

Rav Binny Freedman is the Rosh Yeshiva, founder, and Dean of Yeshivat Orayta. He has been unusually successful in creating and empowering a new generation of young leadership equipped to lead their communities at prestigious college campuses throughout North America, the UK, Australia and South Africa.

Rav Binny is a highly engaging and inspiring educator who has the gift for synthesizing difficult, sophisticated material in a way that inspires both the novice and the scholar.

His proficiency in applying Jewish concepts to contemporary life in a personal and meaningful manner has made him a sought-after speaker and educator around the world.

Rav Binny is an IDF Company Commander who came to Israel as a lone soldier in 1982.



# Rav Yamin Goldsmith



Rav Yamin Goldsmith attended Yeshivat Sha'alvim for two years before serving in the I.D.F with the Yeshivat Shaalvim Hesder Machal program.

He holds a bachelor's degree from Yeshiva University, a master's degree in public administration from Columbia University, was ordained at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University, and is completing his doctoral dissertation in Curriculum and Teaching at Columbia University's Teachers College.

He has worked in both formal and informal Jewish education in the United States and in Israel for almost 30 years and is well known and respected for his warm and engaging personality.

Rav Yamin lives with his wife, Joy, and their children in Beit Shemesh.

# Rav Dr. Yona Goodman

Rav Dr. Yona Goodman is an expert in education who has spent his career teaching, guiding and writing about the unique challenge of raising religious children and teens in the turbulent times in which we live. Rav Goodman received his Doctorate in Jewish Education from Hebrew University.

Rav Goodman is the National Director of Education in the Yeshivot Bnei Akiva Educational Network in Israel. He teaches Tanach and Jewish Education at the Orot College of Education in Elkana.

The former director general of the national Bnei Akiva movement in Israel, Rav Goodman specializes in guiding teachers and parents whose children have begun to deviate from the Jewish way of life. He served as a senior staff member in Mahut, a national center that specializes in helping schools or communities after terror attacks.

He is a member on the national board of directors (Moazet HaChemad) of the Religious Zionist Educational school system and a on the board of directors of Torah MiTzion.



## Rav Yehoshua Grunstein



Rav Yehoshua Grunstein received rabbinic ordination from the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and holds a BA in Education from Herzog College.

Formerly the Rabbi of the Beth Israel Synagogue in Halifax, Canada, he serves as Director of Training and Placement at the Straus-Amiel and Beren-Amiel Institute of Ohr Torah Stone, which trains, places and offers ongoing support to a vibrant cadre of spiritual leaders who serve the Jewish world around the globe, to promote a Judaism based on Halacha, loving-kindness, professionalism and unity.

Rav Grunstein also serves as an administrator of the rabbinical court for conversions, located in Gush Etzion, and is part of the founding faculty of the English speaking Kollel of Efrat.

An experienced rabbi, mentoring Rabbis daily from around the Globe, sought out clergy for life-cycle events, writer and popular lecturer in Israel and around the world.

## Rav Jesse Horn

Rav Jesse Horn is a Senior Ram at Yeshivat Hakotel. He is known for his methodological and Brisker approach to Gemara, his creative shiurim in Tanach, and his warm personality. In his shiurim, he motivates students to rigorously dissect texts, to ask major questions on the sugya at hand, and to intuit the interpretations offered by the Rishonim.

Rav Horn also teaches at MMY and has taught in other seminaries, such as Shaalvim for Women and Midreshet HaRova. He regularly lectures as a scholar-in-residence in communities all over the world.

Rav Horn is the author of Double Take, a book about Biblical personalities, as well as numerous other articles for Beis Yitzhak, Arutz Sheva, World Mizrahi, and other scholarly publications.

He also authors a weekly email in which he answers Halachic questions to an audience of almost 1,500 readers.

Rav Horn earned a B.A. in Judaic Studies and an M.A. in Jewish Education from Yeshiva University. He received his ordination from Yeshiva University/RIETS. Rabbi Horn resides in Neve Daniel along with his wife and six children.



## Rav Ari Kahn



Rav Ari Kahn, a Rabbi, author, and educator, lives in Givat Ze'ev, Israel.

Rav Kahn received his rabbinic ordination from Yeshiva University's Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, where he studied with Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik and Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein. He graduated from Yeshiva University with a BA in Psychology and an MS in Talmud.

Rav Kahn is the Director of Foreign Student Programs at Bar-Ilan University in Israel, where he is a Senior Lecturer in Jewish Studies. He also serves as Rabbi of the Mishkan Etrog community in Givat Ze'ev.

He has authored ten books on Jewish thought, including the highly acclaimed "Echoes of Eden" series, and has published hundreds of articles on Torah and Jewish thought. He is a member of the Vaad Rabbanie Zaka.

## Naomi Kahn

Naomi Linder Kahn received degrees in Political Science and Near Eastern Languages and Literatures from New York University. She served as Director of the Schools Of Judaic Studies and of Education at Lander Institute of Jerusalem, and is a well-known editor and translator. Mrs. Kahn is the Director of the International Division at Regavim, a research-based think tank and lobbying group dedicated to the protection and preservation of Israel's sovereignty.



## Rav David Katz



Rav David Katz is the Director of Michlelet Mevaseret Yerushalayim (MMY) and has been with MMY since its inception 23 years ago.

He studied at Yeshiva University in New York and Yeshivat Torat Moshe in Jerusalem.

Rabbi Katz is an extremely popular teacher – in particular his classes on the Halachik process and contemporary Israeli society – and has lectured extensively not only in seminary, but with teenagers and adults alike in communities and summer camps throughout the United States, the United Kingdom, South Africa and Australia.

Originally from Teaneck, New Jersey, Rabbi Katz made aliya in 1989, is a father of 6 and proud grandfather of 6, and presently lives with his family in Ramat Bet Shemesh.

## Rav Menachem Leibtag

Rav Menachem Leibtag, founder of the Tanach Study Center [www.tanach.org](http://www.tanach.org), is an internationally acclaimed bible scholar and pioneer of Jewish Education on the internet.

His essays on Parashat ha'Shavua reflect his vibrant thematic-analytical approach, blending the methods of modern scholarship with traditional approaches.

As a faculty member in a number of Yeshivot and Seminaries in Israel, he is best known for his ability to teach students how to study Tanach.

Rav Leibtag also teaches at Matan, Midreshet Lindenbaum, & Yeshivat Shaalvim; and routinely lectures around the globe, primarily as a Scholar in Residence in communities in North America.



## Cheryl Mandel



Cheryl Mandel was born in Toronto, grew up in a secular, assimilated family and met and married her husband, Dr. David Mandel, while at University of Toronto, from where she graduated in 1970. Together they had five children and in 1987 they made Aliyah with their young family to Alon Shvut in Gush Etzion.

In April 2003, their middle son Daniel was killed in the IDF while arresting terrorists in Nablus. A charismatic young officer aged 24, his life and death continue to influence and inspire many people.

Following this, Cheryl felt the need to speak about her experiences as a bereaved mother, so she started speaking to groups about Zionism, the importance of the IDF for Jews worldwide, overcoming adversity and life in Israel.

In Israel, Cheryl is a much requested speaker for the IDF, who call her to speak to foreign armies and groups of soldiers, and as an inspirational speaker for students on one-year programmes. Her ability to relate to people and her message of strength and overcoming adversity has a strong and memorable effect on all that hear her.

## Rav David Milston

Rav David Milston is Director of the Overseas Program at Midreshet HaRova. Born and raised in London, Rav Milston earned a B.A. in Jewish Studies at Jews' College where he became a talmid "muvhak" of Rabbi Isaac Bernstein zt"l. He studied for several years at Yeshivat Har Etzion under the guidance of Rav Yehuda Amital, zt"l and Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, zt"l, and received semicha from the Chief Rabbinate of Israel.

In addition to his role at Midreshet HaRova, Rav Milston lectures and delivers shiurim to youngsters and adults, including in his home community of Alon Shvut where he lives with his wife and their six children. He also performs weddings for couples, both religious and secular, all across Israel, through the Tzohar organization.

Rav Milston has written a number of books, including "The Three Pillars" on Parashat HaShavua, "Ki Va Moed" on the Jewish calendar, and "Eternity" on the Prophets.



## Rav Doron Perez



Rav Doron Perez is the Head of the Mizrahi World Movement, a position he has held since he returned to Israel in 2014 from Johannesburg, South Africa.

During his 15-year shlichut in South Africa, Rav Perez fulfilled multiple leadership roles, as Executive Director of Mizrahi SA, the Senior Rabbi of the Mizrahi Shul, and Head of the Yeshiva College school, the first and largest Torah school in Southern Africa.

Rav Perez was born and raised in Johannesburg, South Africa, and made Aliyah at the age of 18. He studied for 10 years in some of Israel's leading Yeshivot, served in the IDF as part of the Hesder program, and completed his rabbinic ordination and a Bachelor of Education majoring in Jewish Philosophy. He is the author of the book *Leading the Way*, and a sought-

after speaker and scholar-in-residence in communities in Israel and around the world.

At World Mizrahi, Rav Perez's major focus is on organizational transformation and invigorating the global Religious Zionist movement with its dual focus on Jewish and Zionist identity and destiny.

Rav Perez lives in Yad Binyamin with his wife Shelley and four children.

## Sivan Rahav Meir

Sivan Rahav-Meir is one of the most popular media personalities in Israel today. She is a primetime anchor on Channel 2 News; has a column in Israel's largest newspaper, *Yediot Aharonot*; and has a weekly radio show on *Galei Tzahal* (Army Radio).

Originally from a secular Israeli family, Rahav-Meir became religiously observant during her teens.

She is one of the very few public intellectuals who is well respected across the religious-secular spectrum, and has attracted a tremendous following on social media for her Torah-infused, family-centered insights into Jewish life and tradition. Her lectures in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem attract over one thousand people every week.

Ms. Rahav-Meir has a BA in Political Science and Management from Tel Aviv University.

She lives in Jerusalem with her husband, media personality Yedidya Meir, and their five children.



## Rav Dr Sharon Shalom



Rav Shalom made Aliya to Israel from Ethiopia on his own at the age of nine. He studied at Yeshivat Har Etzion received his rabbinic ordination and serves as a Captain in the IDF Reserves.

Rav Shalom has a broad education in theology and philosophy. He is a graduate of "Beit Morasha" in Jerusalem and a graduate of Bar Ilan University's Institute for Advanced Torah Studies, where he was in the Ph.D. student track. He has an M.A. and Ph.D. from Bar Ilan University's Talmud Department

He is a senior lecturer at Ono Academic College, teaches at Bar Ilan University, and serves as the Rabbi of the "Kdoshei Israel" community in Kiryat Gat.

In 2012, Dr. Shalom published his book – *From Sinai to Ethiopia: the Halachic World and Ethiopian Jewish Thought*, which includes "Shulchan Orot" – the halachic guide for the Beta Israel community. In addition, he is involved in writing a curriculum on the topic of Ethiopian Jewry and its culture for Jewish educational institutions in the United States.

## Rav Johnny Solomon

Rav Johnny Solomon is a passionate Torah learner, a reflective Torah thinker and an energetic Torah teacher.

Originally from London, Johnny has a BSc (Hons) in Math & Religious Studies, an MA in Jewish Education, and semicha from the Montefiore Kollel (London).

Beyond this, Johnny has been a participant in the Lookstein Fellowships for Senior Jewish Educators (Lookstein Centre, Bar Ilan), the Shalom Hartman Tichon Programme for Senior Jewish Educators, the Ashdown Fellowships for Senior Jewish Educators, and the Reshut Rabim Beit Midrash (Yaakov Herzog College).

While in London, Johnny held numerous senior positions including Head of Judaic Studies at Immanuel College and later, Head of Judaic Studies at Hasmonian Girls' School. In 2012 Rav Johnny made aliya with his family, and he divides his time between teaching Tanach, Halacha & Jewish Thought at Machon Ma'ayan and at Midreshet Torat Chesed, while also working as a Jewish Education Consultant to numerous institutions.



## Rav Gideon Sylvester



Rav Gideon Sylvester grew up in London and then spent eight years studying in Yeshiva, first at Yeshivat Hamivtar, then in Yeshivat Har Etzion and finally in the Kolel Dati Leumi in the old city of Safed. He also holds a degree in History and a Master's Degree in Education.

Rabbi Sylvester's first post was at Radlett United Synagogue. During his seven-year tenure the community expanded from 250 families to over 550.

In 2004 Rabbi Sylvester and his family headed for Jerusalem where he took up his post as United Synagogue Israel Rabbi. This involves visiting, teaching and mentoring the hundreds of young Brits who come to Israel for a year on youth movement, yeshiva or seminary programmes.

Rabbi Gideon visits JFS and King David School, Liverpool on their Lavi scheme monthly to bring religious inspiration.

In addition to his work for the United Synagogue, Rabbi Sylvester has acted as an Adviser on Diaspora Affairs at the Office of the Prime Minister of Israel. He is also extremely active in the field of Judaism and Human Rights.

## Rav Moshe Taragin

Rav Moshe Taragin has been a Ram at Yeshivat Har Etzion in Gush Etzion for the past 24 years. He has Semicha from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, a BA in Computer Science from Yeshiva College, and an MA in English Literature from City University. Rav Taragin previously taught Talmud at Columbia University, lectured in Talmud and Bible at the IBC and JSS divisions of Yeshiva University, and served as Assistant Rabbi at the Fifth Avenue Synagogue.

In addition, Rabbi Taragin currently teaches at the Beit Midrash for Women of Yeshivat Har Etzion in Migdal Oz in Gush Etzion. He is the author of an Internet shiur entitled "Talmudic Methodology" with over 5,000 subscribers a weekly shiur on Pirkei Avot with over 1400 subscribers and has delivered hundreds of audio shiurim featured on the Yeshivat Har Etzion "Audio Beit Midrash". Rabbi Taragin has authored a Yom Ha'atzmaut Machzor for Koren publishing house.

Rabbi Taragin and his wife have 8 children and reside in Gush Etzion.



## Rav Reuven Taragin



Rav Reuven Taragin is the Dean of Overseas Students at Yeshivat Hakotel and the Educational Director of The World Mizrahi Movement.

Rav Taragin is a Wexner Fellow and Musmach of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate and has completed a B.A. in Science and philosophy at Yeshiva University and an M.A. in Jewish History and Education at Touro College (Israel). Rav Taragin has also been deeply involved in informal education programming including NCSY shabbatonim and the creation of the YUSSR summer program.

Rav Taragin is the Rosh Beit Midrash at Camp Moshava (I.O.), and Rav of Kehillat Eretz Chemdah in Katamon.

Rav Taragin is also the founder and director of the Yeshivat Hakotel Community Education Conferences which bring together tens of community educators who work with thousands of parents to help them best educate their children and of the Seventy for Seventy Yom Ha'atzma'ut Program

Rav Taragin lives with his wife Shani and their six children in Alon Shvut, Israel.

## Rabbanit Shani Taragin

Rabbanit Shani Taragin received her B.A. and M.A. in Tanakh and Talmud from Bar-Ilan University and is a graduate of Nishmat's Keren Ariel Program for certification as a yoetzet halacha in issues of family purity law.

She is the educational director of Matan Eshkolot – Tanakh teachers' education program and of the Morot l'Halacha program in Matan Renana.

Shani serves on the advisory committee for the Mizrahi Olami Shalhevet program for shlichim and lectures throughout Israel and North America on topics of Tanakh, Jewish Education, and Jewish Law. She is a senior lecturer in Matan and is the curriculum coordinator for the Matan – Bnei Akiva program (MTVA). In addition, Shani is a Ra'mit Tanakh in Midreshet Lindenbaum and teaches at Migdal Oz, the Women's Beit Medrash of Efrat and Gush Etzion and in Matan Ramat Shiloh.

Together with her husband, Reuven, she serves as Rosh Bet Midrash for the Bet Midrash Program in Machane Moshava Pennsylvania during the summer and as Educational Director of Mizrahi Olami-RZA. Shani lives with her family in Alon Shvut, Gush Etzion-Israel.



## Rav Eli Weber



Rav Eli Weber is the Director of the William Major z"l Overseas Program at Yeshivat Har Etzion.

Rav Weber, a former Partner at Clifford Chance, graduated from Yeshiva University and Columbia Law School. He studied for three years before and after college at Yeshivat Har Etzion.

Eli and his wife Elka and family lived in Teaneck for many years. They have made Aliya and currently live in Efrat.

Eli has been closely associated with the yeshiva and the Etzion Foundation for over 30 years – as a talmid, board member, Dinner Guest of Honor, and now as staff. As of Elul 2011, Eli serves the yeshiva as the Director of the William Major z"l Overseas Program.

## Rav Gidon Weitzman

Born in England and raised in Wales, Rav Gidon Weitzman studied in Beit El in Israel where he was ordained as a Rav by the Israeli Chief Rabbinate.

He is a teacher, sex counsellor, an expert in fertility, and a writer. He has a number of books and articles published.

Rav Weitzman is the Director of the Puah Institute for Fertility and Medicine in Accordance with the Halacha – he has counseled thousands of couples in areas of fertility, genetics, gynecology, urology all within a halachic framework. He is the Rabbi of the Merkaz Modi'in Synagogue which is a Religious Zionist community made up of Israelis and new Olim. He is a teacher in Midreshet HaRova in Jerusalem, teaching classes in medical ethics, prayer and the thoughts of Rabbi Kook. He is a weekly columnist in the Jewish Press and the OU Torah Tidbits.

Rav Weitzman is a teacher in Gruss Kollel of Yeshiva University and the Midrasha in Yeshiva University.

