

Dear Students and Families,

Welcome to this inaugural newsletter, where we highlight some of the learning achievements and wonderful events and moments from the past six months at Tikvah's High School Fellowships.

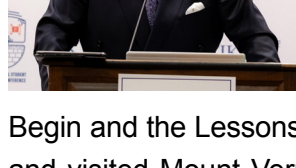
Right now, in the annual reading cycle, we find ourselves midway through Sefer Shemot – the Book of Exodus - which is, fundamentally, a journey towards national freedom and a narrative of leadership, dignity and moral clarity. Reflecting on our journey thus far, these are the Hebraic values we have been looking to cultivate and these are the timeless ideas we engage with and are trying to internalize in our seminars and tutorials.

October 7th marked a pivotal moment, a turning point where we recognized that everything we do at Tikvah is more than just academic pursuit – it is about nurturing our resilience, fortifying our identity, and arming ourselves with the requisite knowledge and wisdom to confront, as we were starkly reminded, a hostile world.

We hope you enjoy reflecting on the last six months and we certainly look forward to continuing this exciting and important journey that lies ahead of us in 2024.

Warm regards,  
**Avi Garson** and **Benjamin Gottesman**,  
Tikvah High School Fellowships

## IN REVIEW



### The National Student Leadership Conference

Over one hundred Begin Scholars and Solomon Fellows from across North America gathered in Washington D.C. over MLK weekend for Tikvah's National Student Leadership Conference. The animating theme of the two-day program was *Jewish Resilience and Resilience: Past, Present, and Future* and was punctuated by an inspiring keynote address by **Rabbi Dr. Meir Y. Soloveichik**, entitled "Menachem Begin and the Lessons of Jewish Leadership". Students participated in rigorous seminars and workshops, and visited Mount Vernon, the ancestral riverside home of George Washington, with **Dr. Tevi Troy**, the National Gallery of Art, one of the world's premier art collections, with **Dr. Jacob Wisse**, and the Hudson Institute, one of DC's most important policy think-tanks.



### The Tikvah Debate Society

The first semester of the Tikvah Debate Society was a resounding success, highlighted by two virtual, all-morning events. In December, we met to debate the age-old question of Israeli public buses running on the Sabbath, a contest won by **Marc Dweck** (Frisch, '26) and **Flynn Goldstein** (JBHA, '27). More recently, students gathered to take sides in the famous Menachem Begin-David Ben-Gurion debate over accepting German Reparations in the aftermath of the Shoah. All teams argued valiantly but the day was ultimately carried by **Ariel Mazar** (Shaihevet, '27) and **Jonathan Rosenblum** (Northern Valley, '26). It has been a privilege to watch students develop their rhetorical and persuasive skills as we continue to grow this program.



### Understanding Antisemitism with Ruth Wisse and Kassy Dillon

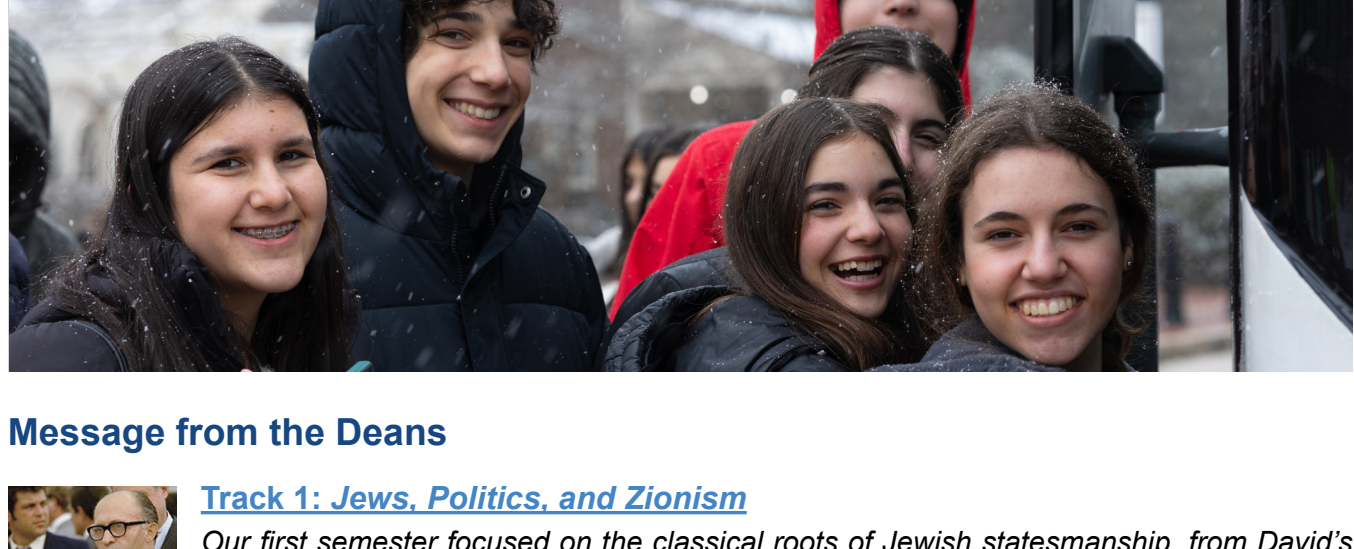
In December, we had the privilege of hosting the renowned scholar and Tikvah Distinguished Senior Fellow, **Dr. Ruth Wisse**, and the dynamic journalist and Tikvah Krauthammer Fellow, **Kassy Dillon**. Dr. Wisse shared her insightful perspective on the psychology and pathology that drive anti-Semitism, explaining how inherently different it is from other forms of racism. You can watch that powerful [lecture here](#). Afterwards, Kassy shared her powerful video report from Kfar Aza—one of the kibbutzim along the Gaza border—recounting her moving experiences reporting from the war zone. Kassy also led an interactive workshop on what to do when confronted with online anti-Semitism and hate speech on social media.



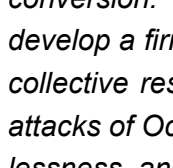
### A Day at the Met

In October, students gathered at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Our Associate Director of High School Fellowships, **Benjamin Gottesman**, led a tour of the artifacts of classical antiquity, focusing on their import in the Jewish story, followed by a biblically themed scavenger hunt throughout the museum's galleries. Afterwards, students met for a lunch and conversation about the situation in Israel with **Alon Arvatz**, CEO and co-founder of PointFive, a cybersecurity startup based in Tel Aviv and the author *The Battle for your Computer: Israel and the Growth of the Global Cyber-Security Industry*.

## THE MENACHEM BEGIN SCHOLARS



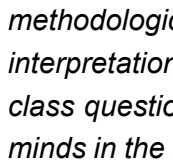
### Message from the Deans



#### Track 1: Jews, Politics, and Zionism

*Our first semester focused on the classical roots of Jewish statesmanship, from David's efforts to bring the Jewish people together and establish Jerusalem as their eternal capital to Esther's courage in "a time such as this", from Ben Zakai's visionary decision to "give me Yavneh" to Abravanel's refusal to be assured of continued power and wealth through conversion. We observed different profiles in Jewish courage, and how leadership demands that we develop a firm moral center before a crisis so that it can guide our response and nurture our instinct for collective responsibility and service to community. Sadly, these conversations also coincided with the attacks of October 7, further accentuating the relevance of our discussions on Jewish power and powerlessness, and the global response to Israel's self-defense.*

**Dr. Justin Cammy**, Dean of 'Jews, Politics, and Zionism'



#### Track 2: The Hebrew Bible and Jewish Thought

*Two very exciting things are happening in the Bible and Jewish Thought track. The first is that we have been exploring some of the major themes of Genesis: Is man inherently good, bad, or somewhere inbetween? What kind of education does man need to become good? And how does God's unique relationship to Abraham and his particular family provide a vehicle for mankind's universal education? And we've also been reflecting on important methodological issues like the relationship between the plain meaning of the text and the body of rabbinic interpretation that surrounds it. The second exciting thing is that the students are asking incredible, world-class questions. The reason I'm confident calling these questions "world-class" is because the greatest minds in the history of the Jewish people have asked them already, so we know we are on the right path. Rachel Besser, Coby Nadel and I are looking forward to reading the second half of Genesis with the students when we reconvene in February.*

**Jeff Bloom**, Dean of 'The Hebrew Bible and Jewish Thought'



#### Track 3: Judaism and the Western Mind

*Our Judaism and the Western Mind scholars took a break at the most inconvenient moment! When last seen, Prince Hamlet was dragging Polonius's body off stage, after accidentally killing him, failing to get revenge on Claudius for the death of his father, and having a dramatic argument with his mother. But just because we will leave Hamlet there until February, doesn't mean we can't think about him in the meantime. Our scholars have been considering questions of repentance, the afterlife, and duty, in Shakespeare's Elizabethan world and in our own. They've been thinking about how Socrates's debate about the afterlife in Plato's Apology differs from Hamlet's in the "To be or not to be" speech. And they've been thinking a lot about what parents and children owe one another. I encourage our scholars to watch a production of Hamlet in their free time. It can help really cement the play's action in their minds, as well as bring it gloriously to life. Hope you had a great break, and I look forward to continuing our journey soon.*

**Dr. Sara Skwire**, Dean of 'Judaism and the Western Mind'

## THE SOLOMON FELLOWSHIP



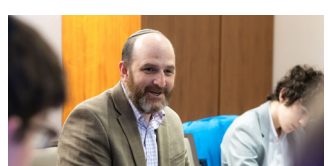
### Oxford-Style Tutorials

In these intimate tutorials we have and will continue to explore diverse subjects in Jewish thought, history, law, philosophy, and art – ranging from the great speeches of Israel to the legal foundations of the United States. Diving into Plato's philosophical quest for excellence, Maimonides' pursuit of virtue, and following Rav Kook's spiritual guidance through modernity. We discover the inspirational of the Hebrew Bible and grapple with Nietzsche's moral dilemmas. These topics are an opportunity for students to deepen their knowledge in their chosen topics and receive personalized attention from our master instructors.



### The Solomon Journal

We are thrilled to unveil the latest edition of the Solomon Journal, our flagship high school publication, anchored by this past semester's symposium question: *What is the nature of Jewish Resilience?* We take great pride in the lucidity, moral clarity, and piercing insight our contributors demonstrate on every page and encourage you to peruse all seventeen articles at your leisure. Special thank you to our Editors-in-Chief **Lir Yissar** (Ulpanot Orot '24) and **Jacob Shayefar** (Beverly Hills High School '24) and our faculty Consulting Editor **Kennedy Lee**.



### Tikvah College Panel Series (two sessions)

In December, we held two College Panel Events titled *Choosing a College: What are the Real Questions?* and *What are the Best BA Programs in America? A New Jewish Conversation*.

The [first panel](#) featured Tikvah Collegiate Forum student leaders from UCLA, George Washington University, Princeton, and Yeshiva University. The questions were focused on how to make the right choice, the fall-off of Oct. 7 on campus, extracurriculars, and the impact and role Tikvah plays in their college experience. The [second panel](#), held just a few days later, was moderated by Tikvah CEO **Eric Cohen** and featured a distinguished lineup of university leaders exploring various alternative approaches to college as higher education in America becomes increasingly hostile to both Jews and conservatives.

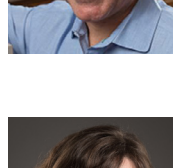
## WHAT'S NEXT

### The National Student Leadership Conference

Tonight at 6:30 PM we will be hosting **Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Brody**, Founder and Director Emeritus of the Tikvah Oversees Student Institute, live on Zoom. Rabbi Brody will be delivering a lecture entitled *"Jewish Military Ethics: Lessons from the Book of Genesis"* in conjunction with the release of his new book *Ethics of a Jewish View of War & Morality*. Both students and parents are encouraged to attend and can [RSVP HERE](#)

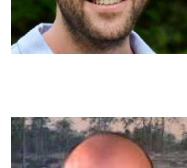
## FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Check out our esteemed faculty's recent contributions to public discourse



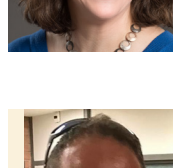
Begin Dean **Justin Cammy** reflects on October 7th in a powerful letter to you, his students, in the *Times of Israel*.

[READ HERE](#)



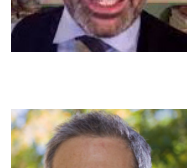
Solomon Instructor **Tal Fortgang** takes to the *Wall Street Journal* to castigate Hamas sympathizers and their disruptive scare campaigns.

[READ HERE](#)



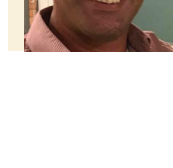
Begin Dean **Sarah Skwire** joins the Curious Task Podcast to discuss the timeless relevancy of Shakespeare.

[READ HERE](#)



Solomon Instructor **Aaron Tugendhaft** explains the shortcomings of professional support for Palestine in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

[READ HERE](#)



Solomon Instructor **Tuvia Book** explains why he decided to return to the IDF in the aftermath of October 7th in the *Times of Israel*.

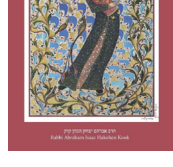
[READ HERE](#)



Solomon Instructor **Brian Horowitz** provides an overview of pre-state Revisionism in his contribution to the upcoming *Routledge Handbook of Zionism*, entitled "Rightward Bound: Jabotinsky-Achimeir-Stern and the Leadership of Zionism's Right in Mandate Days."

[READ HERE](#)

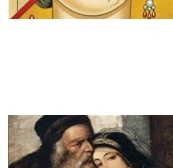
## STAFF LITERARY PICKS



### Benjamin Gottesman

Associate Director of High School Fellowships

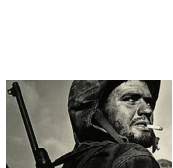
I am reading Betzael Naor's breakthrough translation of *The Soliloquy of the World of Chaos*, an essay by Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the foremost thinker of modern Religious Zionism. Rav Kook explores the revolutionary attitudes of his day, filtered through the lens of Lurianic Kabbalah and his general approach to the human condition. His piercing insight, combined with Naor's plentiful exposition, provides a treatise worthy of its peculiarity, for both its linguistic beauty and its resonance today.



### Irina Rakhlis

Director of Educational Programming and High School Fellowships

I recently decided to reread Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*, one of the revolutionary masterpieces of the 20th century. Written in the form of mystical realism, the novel introduced Soviet audiences to previously taboo concepts, such as God and religion, and was initially banned in the USSR. I love rereading this work to uncover new messages, reaffirming the timeless brilliance of this book.



### Jonathan Schatz Mizrahi

Begin Instructor

I am currently reading (and teaching) Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Using the scholarship of Paul Cantor as a guide, we are focusing on the political themes and questions that are raised by the play. In particular, we are exploring the nature of Venice as a proto-modern (commercial) city and the ways in which the jovial culture of Venice marks a contrast to the serious lives of Antonio and Shylock.



### Avi Garson

Director of Tikvah High School Fellowships

I recently began reading *"The War of the World: History's Age of Hatred"* by the Scottish historian Niall Ferguson. This comprehensive work delves into the dreadful violence and bloodshed of the 20th century, focusing particularly on the World Wars. It seeks to explain how, in a century of modernity and progress, things went so horribly wrong. Each page contains within it fascinating historical insights and valuable lessons about the nature of war. History often repeats itself, so it is worthwhile studying the past to make sense of the present and, perhaps, even predict the future.



**FAMOUS AMERICANS:** This surname, which comes from an Old English term for rocky ground, is shared by a Major League Baseball sverfette, a United States Secretary of War, and a Major League Baseball MVP.

Submit answers to [bgottesman@tikvahfund.org](mailto:bgottesman@tikvahfund.org)