



**Sha'arei Tzion  
Beit Midrash for Community Rabbis  
Review of 2024-2025**



***Report Prepared for the Matanel Foundation  
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## Overview of the Program

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Sha'arei Tzion is a Beit Midrash that prepares young rabbinical students with the skills they need to become Community Rabbis, including the halachic knowledge needed to pass the Chief Rabbinate's exams as well as pastoral and community building skills.

The program includes three main circles of activity:

- Halachic study to obtain the qualification to become a community rabbi.
- Study of the lives and wisdom of the Sephardi Sages in recent generations, including the culture and Jewish study of the Golden Age of Sephardic Jewry.
- Study of pastoral and community building skills, including family and civil mediation, social work, public policy, rhetoric and the art of speaking, the history of Sephardi and Mizrahi Jewry, philosophy and Jewish thinking, community leadership, community building, and more.

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## Activities: 2024-2025

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2024-2025 was In the third year of the program's activity. This was the program's largest year so far, with a total of 24 rabbis studying in the Beit Midrash.

This was also the second year in which the program operated alongside, and in parallel to, the war. The war impacted the program dramatically — from the fact that many of the fellows served for varying periods in active reserve duty, to the complex social, communal, and personal challenges that accompanied wartime. These realities entered into the Beit Midrash and sparked intense discussions within the group, both on issues relating to the broader national context and on the challenges within community, family, and personal spheres.



## Participants

This year's cohort was composed of 13 continuing fellows in their second or third year of studies, together with 11 who joined this year:

| Continuing Students (2nd & 3rd Year)   | 1st Year Students   |
|--|---|
| 1) Avraham Mankin<br>2) Achiya Ben Fazi<br>3) Matan Schneiweiss<br>4) Emanuel Deref<br>5) Shilo Gad Hoze<br>6) Or Ashot<br>7) Yuval Wexler<br>8) Hasdei Weiner<br>9) Shai Ben Nachum<br>10) Yedidya Lau<br>11) Rafael Fada<br>12) Nadav Nizari<br>13) Itamar Evron | 1) Uriah Grinwold<br>2) Neria Teitz<br>3) Yair Rahat<br>4) Amichai Shoham<br>5) Itamar Frish<br>6) Sagi Mazoz<br>7) Shuval Kahane<br>8) Yonatan Sanders<br>9) Elad Lahmi<br>10) Yotam Halperin<br>11) Michael Tzion |

**The fellows whose names are highlighted in blue have completed all the exams required for their certification as community rabbis within the Chief Rabbinate framework.**

Additional details about the fellows, their backgrounds, and their fields of work can be found on the [program's website](#), which also features various photos from Beit Midrash life. *To date, more than 10 program participants have been certified as Community Rabbis, and others are close to receiving their certification.*

## Program

Classes takes place three full days a week — Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday — at Yad HaRav Nissim in Jerusalem. Most of the program time is dedicated to preparing the students for the Chief Rabbinate's exams. Over the past year, we focused on the topic of *Pesach – Yom Tov and Chol HaMoed*. In addition, the fellows are trained in skills needed to fulfill additional aspects of their role as Community Rabbi:

- A weekly class led by Rabbi Yitzhak Shuraki focused on the halachic rulings and leadership traditions of the sages of Spain and North Africa in recent generations, with attention to questions of economic and social policy, concepts of community and the rabbi's responsibility toward all its parts, the institution of communal



ordinances, and familiarity with the teachings and leadership of prominent figures in Eastern and North African Jewish communities.

- A series of meetings with Rabbi David Stav addressed practical questions and challenges faced on a day-to-day basis by community rabbis in Israel. Topics addressed include public and media communication by rabbis in Israeli public discourse, teaching Torah to diverse audiences, integrating the rabbi into the local ceremony schedule, and the rabbi's involvement in community and holiday events beyond synagogue life.
- From time to time, we held seminars on special topics that were joined by other rabbis not in the program. Over the past year, we held four such seminars:
  - **Halachic issues related to war** — identification of fallen soldiers, public policy of the Military Rabbinate, implications of the war for taharat hamishpacha (mikveh), Shabbat and other issues
  - **Jewish identity verification process in Israel** — halachic, practical, and academic perspectives
  - **Conversion in Israel** — from the perspective of the Chief Rabbinate, together with alternative viewpoints
  - **Marriage officiation and issues related to the ketubah**

Each of these seminars was attended by approximately 20 rabbis from the program, along with additional rabbis who are members of the Community Rabbinate Forum, a support group we established to serve graduates of the program.

- From time to time, we invite special guest lecturers to provide the trainees with additional perspectives and to answer their questions. During the past year, these included Rabbi Yaakov Roza, member of the Chief Rabbinate Council and Chief Rabbi of Bat Yam, Prof. Moshe Halbertal, Prof. Zvi Zohar, Rabbi Yitz Greenberg, Dr. Ariel Finkelstein, Rabbi David Yosef, Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Zion Cohen, Chief Rabbi of Or Yehuda, Rabbi Uriel Ganzel, and others



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## Looking Forward to 2025-2026

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We are currently finalizing the cohort for 2025-2026, the program's fourth year.

- Approximately seven new fellows will join approximately twelve continuing from previous years.
- We plan to hold a monthly tours and half-day seminar on various topics, involving all fellows and, in some cases, additional rabbis from the Community Rabbinate Forum.