



Media Contacts:

Sydney Schwartz Gross
Marketing Specialist, Hebrew College
617-559-8785 | sgross@hebrewcollege.edu

Ayana Morse
Executive Director, SVARA
ayana@svara.org

Hebrew College and SVARA to create unique Talmud teaching fellowship

NEWTON, MA, Tuesday, April 6, 2021 — [Hebrew College](#) is joining with [SVARA: A Traditionally Radical Yeshiva](#) to transform how, where, and why rabbis teach Talmud.

Beginning next fall, Hebrew College will offer a unique fellowship to rabbinical students and alumni to help them teach Talmud in their communities through a lens grounded in ancient tradition that creatively imagines new possibilities. The pilot year of the fellowship, “Pedagogy in Practice: A Talmud Fellowship,” is made possible by the generous support of the [Lippman Kanfer Foundation for Living Torah](#).

“We see Talmud as a central mechanism for understanding, shaping, and even radically reimagining contemporary Jewish life, and understand Talmud study as a way of entering into the world of the ancient rabbis in order to envision a new Jewish present,” says Rabbi Jane Kanarek, Associate Professor of Rabbinics at Hebrew College and co-editor of *Learning to Read Talmud: What It Looks Like and How It Happens*. “Building on the textual skills that fellows have developed at Hebrew College and the teaching philosophy of SVARA, this program will provide Hebrew College students and alumni with the tools to teach Talmud in its original Hebrew and Aramaic to almost any audience. Through studying SVARA’s pedagogical framework and the literature on Talmud pedagogy, students will begin the process of becoming reflective practitioners of Talmud teaching.”

“The program is anchored in the idea that successful Talmud teaching must include the creation of a culture of love, joy, empowerment, but also rigor,” adds Rabbi Benay Lappe, SVARA founder. “Learning Talmud in SVARA’s method brings every learner—whether they have just learned their alef-bet or have studied Talmud for years—into that powerful, transformational experience of the bet midrash that has been at the core of our tradition for 2,000 years, but has until now has only been accessible to one percent of us. Our methodology allows that experience to travel to the other 99 percent. When centered as a spiritual practice, Talmud study has the potential to shape teachers and learners into people who are equipped to look creatively and critically at both our tradition and the world, and then to find the courage to work toward making both more liberatory.”

The Rabbinical School at Hebrew College is a leader in innovative, pluralist, and textually rigorous rabbinic training. While Talmud study is a central element of the curriculum, Hebrew College does not

currently offer a course that helps students translate their acquisition of Talmudic knowledge into the ability to teach Talmud.

SVARA is a traditionally radical yeshiva grounded in the spiritual practice of Talmud study that centers queer insights and empowers people to shape new forms of Torah and tradition. Over the years, SVARA has developed and honed an exceptional model for teaching Talmud, providing a clear structure for people of all backgrounds and levels of experience. SVARA's methodology involves a *beit midrash*—study hall—where each student develops a sense of ownership of the text and empowerment within Jewish tradition.

Fellows will participate in an intensive training module with Rabbi Lappe to turn their theoretical study of Talmud pedagogy into the skills of teaching, as well as a semester-long study of Talmud pedagogy with Rabbi Dr. Kanarek. Fellows will then teach Talmud classes under the supervision and guidance of Rabbi Lappe and Rabbi Dr. Kanarek, drawing on the pedagogies and skills they have gained in the program.

“Moving through rabbinical School grounded in SVARA's pedagogy of radical inclusivity paired with serious and deep engagement with Jewish texts has helped me feel empowered to bring my whole self to my learning and to study and teach with an eye towards the fullness of our Jewish community,” says Frankie Sandmel, an alumnus of and former program director at SVARA and current rabbinical student at Hebrew College, who is teaching a community education class on Talmud. “I came into rabbinical school with the question, ‘how can my learning serve the broadest audience and reach even those far at the margins?’ And, with SVARA's support and mentorship, I have been able to develop real tools to do so.”

ABOUT HEBREW COLLEGE AND SVARA

Hebrew College is an innovative national institute for Jewish learning and leadership based in Newton, Massachusetts. We are dedicated to Jewish literacy, creativity, and community, and a world of dignity and compassion for all. Our students are future rabbis, cantors, and educators, and people at every stage of life who love to learn. Together, we are infusing Jewish life with substance, spirit, beauty, imagination, and a sense of purpose. Learn more at <https://hebrewcollege.edu/>.

SVARA is a traditionally radical yeshiva dedicated to the serious study of Talmud through the lens of queer experiences. SVARA's unique pedagogy makes Talmud study in the original accessible—for the first time in Jewish history—to all who want to learn. At SVARA, everyone—queer, straight, trans, alef-bet beginners, experienced talmudists, secular, religious, Jews, non-Jews—everyone learns together in a mixed-level bet midrash that recognizes as crucial the insights of all those on the margins. Learn more at <https://svara.org/>.