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Hebrew College Miller Center for Interreligious Learning & Leadership

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“Greening Judaism: Climate Science and Eco Kashrut”

NEWTON, MA, Friday, December 8, 2023 — Hebrew College was awarded a grant from the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) to survey the state of science education and eco-theology in North American Jewish seminaries

The [ALEPH Ordination Program](#) and [the Betty Ann Greenbaum Miller Center for Interreligious Learning and Leadership of Hebrew College](#) received a \$15,000 grant from the [American Association for the Advancement of Science](#) (AAAS) for a project entitled "Greening Judaism: Climate Science and Eco Kashrut." The grant-supported project is part of the Climate Science in Theological Education Initiative for capacity building. Hebrew College joins a cohort of predominantly Christian seminaries to represent a uniquely Jewish perspective in the exploration of climate science and religion in higher education and faith communities.

The project, led by Rabbi Or Rose, Founding Director and the Miller Center and Rabbi Dr. Natan Margalit Founder and President of Organic Torah of ALEPH (Alliance for Jewish Renewal), will survey the state of science education and eco-theology in North American Jewish seminaries and convene Jewish leaders to reflect on the topic of “eco kashrut.” This heuristic term, first coined by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi (d. 2014), has been used to extend the traditional Jewish system of dietary laws (kashrut) to address contemporary theological and ethical issues about consumption and resources in an age of climate crisis. Schachter-Shalomi advocated for a Jewish “Gaian” consciousness, viewing the earth as a living organism, and humankind as stewards of the planet. This philosophy undergirds Rose’s and Margalit’s research, which will assess current best practices in eco-kashrut education at Jewish seminaries, particularly in relation to food production, labor, and food security.

“There is an urgent need among emerging Jewish spiritual and ethical leaders to gain a basic understanding of science and to deepen their knowledge of eco-theologies,” Rabbi Rose said. “While there are individual scholars, theologians, ethicists, and educators working on these issues in our schools, there has not yet been a thorough investigation into what future Jewish clergy need to learn to serve effectively in an era of climate crisis.”

According to Rose and Margalit, investigating how science and spirituality inform one-another will better prepare leaders of congregations and other settings to advocate for a human response to environmental crises.

“Judaism may be a resource for the movement from a waste culture to a culture of wonder,” wrote Rabbi Margalit in [2019](#), adding that because Judaism “seeks a dynamic balance and invites a plurality of voices.”

Participants who will attend the round table discussion include Laura Bellows of Dayenu, Jeremy Benstein of the Heschel Center in Israel, Ayelet Cohen of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Fred Dobbs of the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, Jill Hammer of Academy of Jewish Religion, Mordecai Leibling of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, author David Seidenberg, religion scholar Ariel Evan Mayse, and author and speaker Jericho Vincent.

At the end of the survey, Rose and Margalit will convene 10 North American Jewish leaders for three virtual gatherings to share survey results and explore potential paths forward in collaboration with science advisors from the AAAS. The project leaders will then publish a “green paper” of relevant findings and recommendations to share within the field of Jewish seminary education.

The project aims to increase awareness of climate science among Jewish seminary students, faculty, and administrators, as well as Jewish leaders more broadly. The findings of the research seek to provide insight for the creation of new educational pathways that draw on the depth of Jewish thought and climate science. Its hope is a thoughtful and in-depth understanding of how to strengthen climate theology and praxis in Jewish settings.

“If we have the wisdom and humility to live with rough edges and give up on total control, to deal with the difficulties and dangers, we can move from waste to wonder,” says Margalit.

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[The Betty Ann Greenbaum Miller Center for Interreligious Learning and Leadership](#), founded in 2016, provides current and future religious and ethical leaders with the knowledge and skills to serve in a religiously diverse society. We work with clergy, academics, and communal leaders, as well as high school, undergraduate, and graduate students and seminarians.

[Hebrew College](#) is a vibrant graduate school dedicated to promoting deep Jewish learning and inspired leadership within a pluralistic environment of open inquiry, intellectual rigor, personal engagement and spiritual creativity. [We reimagine Jewish learning and leadership for an interconnected world, making our lives more meaningful, our communities more vibrant, and our world more whole.](#)

[ALEPH Ordination Program at the Seminary for the Spiritual Renewal of Judaism](#) trains students from diverse backgrounds and every denomination to serve the global Jewish community. Built upon the pioneering work of the visionary catalyst of Jewish Renewal, and ALEPH founder, Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi z”l. The ALEPH Ordination Program trains rabbis, cantors, rabbinic pastors and *mashpi'im* (spiritual directors) to be community builders, teachers, spiritual leaders, counselors, liturgists and artists of the Jewish tradition. Each program’s unique curriculum engages our dynamic faculty and student body in a full spectrum of Jewish learning and practice.