

*TIJS Graduate Research & Travel Grants  
Summer 2015*

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Advisor: Don Seeman (GDR)  
Purpose: Attend the Conservative Yeshiva's summer program on seminal Jewish texts and attend an intensive Hebrew-learning ulpan at Hebrew University to lay the groundwork for all of the research I undertake in Jewish Studies throughout my academic career.

Through the Jeffrey A. Evans Award, I was able to spend the entire summer studying in two academically rigorous programs in Jerusalem. Both programs centered on intensive modern Hebrew language studies, where I set the foundations for building a lifetime of scholarship in Jewish Studies. In addition to learning Hebrew, I also increased my literacy in Jewish liturgy and kashrut, and developed contacts and context for my work in Jewish environmentalism. I spent June and July at the Conservative Yeshiva, an egalitarian *beit midrash* associated with the Conservative and Masorti movements, and August at Hebrew University's Scopus Ulpan.

I was able to attend the full six weeks of Conservative Yeshiva's summer program, which can be divided into two three-week sessions. My days began with four hours of *ulpan* study. Because of the small class size, I received a lot of attention from the instructor and practiced speaking and reading Hebrew extensively. Thanks to the excellent instruction, extensive practice, and intensity of the study, I was able to complete a full level of *ulpan* in those six weeks and develop comfort and familiarity with past and future tenses in that amount of time. I continued my language study after the yeshiva program ended by enrolling in Hebrew University's *ulpan* at the next level, which focused largely on adjectives. This *ulpan* moved more rapidly through the material, but with less individual attention because of the large class size. Through intense, daily practice of grammar and vocabulary, I've progressed by leaps and bounds in my Hebrew reading.

During the first session at the yeshiva, I spent the afternoons in a *nusach* program offered in collaboration with the European Academy of Jewish Liturgy (EAJL). EAJL trains *sh'liach tsibburim* to become *ba'alei tefillah*, which entails knowing the liturgy and *nusach* for the whole year, the 6 systems of Torah cantillation, and life-cycle liturgies. I enrolled in the program to develop competency with the traditional Jewish liturgies. Together we went over the liturgies and *nusach* for weekday, Shabbat, and High Holy Day services. I complemented this with a Torah leining class, where we learned the basic grammar and pronunciation of Torah trope symbols and applied them to the week's *parsha*. Participating in the daily *shacharit* and *mincha* services at the yeshiva helped me absorb the lessons quickly and gain a sense of familiarity that will aid me in fieldwork with communities across the Jewish spectrum.

In the second session at the yeshiva, I participated in a 40-hour kashrut intensive, coming out of it with basic Kashrut certification from the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS). While most of my peers intend to serve as kashrut supervisors, I took the classes primarily because food practices are closely tied to my research on American Jewish environmental movements. We covered the fundamentals of kashrut for both home and industrial kitchens with R. Joel Roth (the *Rav Hamakhshir* for JTS and the Ramah camps). R. Roth led us through the *Shulchan Aruch*, making sure that we knew both the stringencies and leniencies of the law, as well as pragmatic suggestions for how to apply the law when serving as a *mashgiach*. R. Shlomo Zacharow (a *shochet* and a *mashgiach* in Israel) taught us the laws and source texts relating to food on Shabbat and Yom Tov as well as the permissions and prohibitions regarding food made by Gentiles. All of these courses were taught in *havruta* looking at the *Shulchan Aruch* in the original, which we translated together.

Spending the entire summer in Israel also enabled me to deepen the connections I made last summer, develop contacts with leaders of the Jewish American environmental movement, shadow Israeli ecologists in the field, volunteer weekly at the Nature Museum's community garden alongside Israelis, and have researchers guide me through some of the private and national wildlife reserves. These experiences provide a rich backdrop for my research on American Jewish environmentalism and allow me to place my readings and interviews in context. For all of this, I am exceedingly grateful to the Tam Institute.



