

DC Beit Midrash Teacher Guidelines

Dear Prospective DC Beit Midrash Teacher,

We are excited that you will be teaching one of our sessions! The goal of your teacher-led portion of the evening is to

- a. Summarize the key aspects of the week's Bible portion/ parsha.** This can be very brief (2-5 minutes), but the idea is to make sure everyone is on the same page, and to catch those in the group who may not have had a chance to read the parsha in advance.
- b. Make a cogent argument** (supported in Biblical, Rabbinic, or other text) **about one piece of the portion** that the group can chew on, discuss, agree with, challenge, struggle with, and/or hopefully leave thinking about. You should be able to formulate that argument and present it with supporting texts within the Shiur, from 7:30-8:00pm.
- c. Facilitate discussion amongst the attendees** that allows them a safe and intellectually open space to share their thoughts, formulate ideas, and challenge the opinions of others. This occurs when you ask questions to the group, and creating a warm and friendly tone that elicits comments from the group. It is important to build in some time for discussion in your half hour shiur.

Key Facts

Where: DC-JCC, at the corner of 16th and Q Streets, NW. Use the door on Q Street. We usually meet in the **Community Hall**, just on the right as you enter.

When: Snacks & socializing runs 7:15 – 7:30. Shiur / teaching runs from 7:30 – 8:00. Group Learning / Hevrutah Study runs from 8:00 – 9:00.

Crafting Your Shiur

1. Choose the topic of your shiur & collect text-based resources

We ask that your topic be text-based. You can choose a theme / issue related to the week's Torah portion, the Haftarah portion, or to a text from an upcoming holiday. As you look for additional resources, consider traditional Jewish commentators such as Rashi, Ramban, or Sforno, and Rabbinic texts like Midrash, Mishna, and Gemara. But please don't feel limited by that. Past teachers have also cited secular philosophers, poets, and authors.

2. Formulate an argument about the topic you have chosen with your texts as supporting evidence

The texts you bring to class should not be a list that the group simply goes through like a laundry list. Rather, they are meant to help support a claim that you are trying to make about something in the portion.

3. Remember your audience

Beit Midrash members represent a range of Jewish observance, affiliation, and comfort levels with reading and understanding Hebrew. Please plan to have texts available in English so everyone has equal access to them. Of course, you can provide texts in Hebrew as well. But, anything read in Hebrew should also be presented in English.

4. Build in discussion questions

Come up with a few discussion questions that you think will provoke the class to think critically about the issues you are raising. Be mindful of about how long you want the discussion to go.

5. Decide whether you're interested / willing to facilitate the Group Learning session.

Many teachers find that 30 minutes doesn't enable them to fully explore all the material they prepared and the issues raised by the shiur. This is really optional: you do not need to lead the group learning. We just need to know your plan, so that we can plan accordingly.

Action Items Prior to Shiur

6. Email sheets@dcbeitmidrash.org with the following information by Sunday afternoon on the day you teach (these can be in separate emails)

- Whether or not you'd like to facilitate the Group Learning session
- Your theme and central argument
- A list of your supporting texts (the names of the authors/texts)
- A brief (approximately three sentence) bio of yourself

We often prepare a guide sheet each week that includes an annotated bibliography of sorts (identifying some historical information about each source referenced) and a brief biography of the evening's teacher. The information above that you provide will be included on the guide sheet.

7. Prepare your source sheets

The source sheets you prepare should contain any texts other than the parsha that you plan to reference (we have copies of Tanach in our collection though it's fine to include Torah text on your sheet if you'd like) If you can, please make 15-20 copies of your source sheets for attendees. If you prefer, we can make the copies for you at the DC-JCC. In this case, please arrive at the DCJCC by 7:15 pm on the Monday you teach, or email your source sheets to us ahead of time (sheets@dcbeitmidrash.org).

Thanks again for agreeing to teach at the DC Beit Midrash. We look forward to learning with you! If you have any questions, please email Lauren at teachers@dcbeitmidrash.org or Ben and Sophie at info@dcbeitmidrash.org.