

THE TOMER DEVORAH EXPERIENCE FAQ



TOMER DEVORAH SEMINARY
Institute of Advanced Studies For Women

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Who is Tomer Devorah for?

Tomer Devorah is a seminary for dedicated students who are looking for two things. First, a year of expanding their intellectual and academic horizons and second, focusing on internal, personal growth and development. With a dual focus on building both textual/learning skills and the character of the students, Tomer Devorah offers a unique environment of in-class and extracurricular activities geared towards developing the *whole* young Jewish woman.

What is Tomer Devorah's educational philosophy?

Tomer Devorah does not seek to fit all students into a mold of any type. Encouraging students to truly be themselves and develop in a personalized, individual fashion, Tomer Devorah will lay a solid foundation of Torah learning and character growth that will graduate self assured and capable young women who will pursue their goals and dreams with determination and focus. Maintaining an uncommonly high staff-to-student ratio and employing *full time* madrichot and mechanchot provides an educational environment that allows a student to truly thrive.

What is the Hashkafa of the school?

At Tomer Devorah, we maintain that the Torah contains within it the way of life for every Jew. Each person is an individual with her own strengths, personality and character traits. We seek to show our students how the Torah can be their own *personal* guide book for living fulfilling and gratifying lives. Our students will be inspired and empowered to enter into the post-seminary world with a broad, healthy perspective on life, Torah values and the greater Jewish community. Our curriculum and programming are geared toward enabling the Tomer Devorah student to successfully overcome the constant barrage of tests and challenges that face the young modern woman in today's day and age.

What are Tomer Devorah's educational goals for the students?

There are certain skills and Torah concepts that every young Jewish woman should acquire in her year in seminary. Our curriculum and course instruction are geared toward that end. At the same time that students are being filled with knowledge of Torah, they will also be gaining the requisite skills and tools to continue their Torah education beyond their year in seminary.

A unique aspect of the Tomer Devorah curriculum is our Afternoon Beit Midrash period. During this time, students will have the opportunity to expand their horizons by delving into any particular areas of Torah knowledge that they, as individuals, seek to explore. Either in small groups or through one-on-one attention by our skilled Beit Midrash staff, the students will take solid strides in both their Torah knowledge base and their Torah learning abilities.

How many hours of class are there daily and weekly?

The Tomer Devorah schedule involves five mornings, three afternoons and two evenings a week. Each morning there are four time slots for in-class courses and Beit Midrash study. The three afternoons have two in-class time slots and one Beit Midrash slot. The two evenings have two in-class courses each. Please see the Sample Daily Schedule at the end of this booklet.

What classes are taught as part of the Tomer Devorah curriculum?

For our well-rounded and exciting list of core curriculum classes, please see the Core Curriculum List at the end of this booklet.

What electives are offered at Tomer Devorah?

Please see the List of Elective Classes at the end of this booklet. Each Elective Course can be taken for either one or two semesters. Those students who wish to switch electives for the second semester will have the option to do so, or they may remain in the same elective class for the entire year.

What is the role of the Tomer Devorah Beit Midrash?

On campus is a fully stocked, spacious Beit Midrash. Several mornings and three afternoons a week, as part of the daily schedule, students meet in the Beit Midrash for study periods. The **Morning Beit Midrash** period is devoted specifically to Chumash class. Students are given sources and commentaries to study in preparation for our stimulating and exciting text-centered Chumash class. Depending on a student's needs and desires, students will study the sources either in pairs, small groups or together with our experienced and patient Beit Midrash Tutors. This is a crucial time for Tomer Devorah students to hone their text skills. During the **Afternoon Beit Midrash** period, students have the opportunity to explore whatever area of Torah they choose. Again, either on their own in groups or with our tutors, this is the time for a student to learn about areas of Torah that she may have always had an interest in but never had the time or opportunity to pursue.

It is during this Afternoon Beit Midrash period that we offer our **Accelerated Beit Midrash Track**. Students who choose to do so can utilize one, two or three of their weekly Afternoon Beit Midrash periods to accelerate many of their core curriculum classes. When choosing to accelerate a course, a student will be given extra sources and materials to study. These materials are carefully selected by the teachers to complement the student's in-class course work. With this unique approach to individualized learning, the Tomer Devorah student will maximize her ability to gain the most for herself from the year.

Where is Tomer Devorah located?

The epicenter of Jewish life in Israel is Jerusalem. We believe that when a student comes to live in Israel for a year, she should be a part of that vibrancy and excitement. For that reason we have chosen to be situated in a suburb within the city of Jerusalem. The school is located in the beautiful Ramot section of Jerusalem, with its thriving Jewish community and breathtaking views of the surrounding hills of Jerusalem. The school will be situated in close proximity to a shopping center, complete with grocery store and pizza shop. Also available is easy access to bus stops that can shuttle the girls to the center of Jerusalem within minutes. In addition, directly across the street from the school is a stunning and quiet *tayelet* – a boardwalk that runs along the edge of the hills. A perfect setting for a morning jog or afternoon stroll with friends. As another benefit to living in the Ramot community, the students will be able to join and have access to the local indoor swimming pool.

What type of campus is Tomer Devorah housed in?

Tomer Devorah is housed in a specially designed and laid out six story building on a quiet street overlooking the hills of Jerusalem. Tomer Devorah's building is a *completely self-contained campus*. Within the building are two floors of spacious and fully equipped dormitories. The first two stories house the classrooms and Beit Midrash, dining hall, student

lounge and exercise room. Token operated laundry machines, also onsite, will be available for the students to use.

The dorm facilities are spacious and private, many with beautifully tiled *mirpasot* – balconies – overlooking the hills. There is also a cultivated garden on campus.

The facilities are open throughout the entire academic year, even at times when the school is not in session. Students will be able to stay in their rooms, always with staff supervision on-site.

Does Tomer Devorah provide meals?

In keeping with our belief that in order to maximize a student's potential, she must feel comfortable and have a "well taken care of" feeling, the school provides for two nutritious, catered hot meals a day. In addition, the girls will have access to fully-equipped dorm kitchen facilities at all times.

What type of on-site supervision will Tomer Devorah provide?

There will be an Eim Bayit living on-site. In addition to the dorms and other facilities, within the Tomer Devorah campus is a separate apartment where an Eim Bayit will live year-round. Available at all times for the students, our warm and attentive Eim Bayit will be on hand for seeing that all students' needs are tended to. She is available to handle any emergency situations that may arise.

Will students have computer, internet or email access?

Yes. Recognizing that nowadays computers and internet are our students' primary modes of communication, Tomer Devorah provides computer and high speed filtered internet access for its students. In our student lounge we maintain computers where students will be able to check email, keep in touch with family, upload their pictures and burn CDs (and check OnlySimchas from time to time).

How does Tomer Devorah provide for student safety on campus?

Both as educators, and parents of our own families, we realize that the number one concern for all of us is our children's safety. Tomer Devorah has placed a strong emphasis on securing our students' well-being. The school building and grounds are completely and securely enclosed. Entrances and gates will be locked at all times, accessible only through security-coded locks. Only the students and staff will have access to these security codes.

How does Tomer Devorah provide for student safety off campus?

Given the often changing and nuanced security situation in Israel, Tomer Devorah maintains a constantly updated list of places that students may or may not travel to or through unless express *written* permission is given by a particular student's parent. At times, certain areas may be deemed off limits completely. Being that we are here in Israel and closely monitoring the security situation in conjunction with security and police officials, Tomer Devorah reserves the right to withhold permission for travel, even if permission is granted by a parent.

In addition, Tomer Devorah has a mandatory cell phone policy for the students. [Included in tuition costs is a heavily subsidized cell phone plan.] Students must carry their charged cell phones with them at all times. Aside from the ability to be in touch when necessary, through our own network we will have the ability to send a text message to all students at once in the event of an urgent situation that all students must be made aware of.

What extracurricular activities does Tomer Devorah organize and run?

There are several activities and functions that are run throughout the course of the year.

- **Chessed Program** – The goal of the Tomer Devorah Chessed Program is to inspire growth, sensitivity and maturity in our students by involving them in the community in which they live, and the greater Jewish community in Israel. While volunteering in specially screened and selected homes in the Ramot community to help the local families, our students will connect with women of our neighborhood. Other available options will include visiting hospitals to bring happiness and hope to sick children or victims of terror.
- **Tiyulim** – At Tomer Devorah, we place a special emphasis on having the students develop a love for the Land of Israel. We go on many tiyulim throughout the year. There are frequent overnight tiyulim to various cities and locales in Israel. From the Golan to Eilat, we introduce our students to the vast beauty and draw of the Land. Monthly day trips to exciting, educational and fun locations also help facilitate the girls bonding with each other and Eretz Yisrael.
- **Shabbatonim** – Throughout the academic year, there are many Shabbatonim, both in and out of the school. There are several out of school Shabbatonim in different communities in Israel. From Tzefat to the Old City of Jerusalem, these Shabbatonim are experiences that are remembered for a lifetime. Each of our frequent in-school Shabbatonim features a theme, focusing on a specific area of character development. Optional, mini-Shabbatonim organized in communities where teachers live offer another great opportunity for students and staff to bond. In addition, the students gain a broader perspective on life in Israel.

How does Tomer Devorah provide for students on off-Shabbatot?

Students are always welcome to stay on campus for Shabbat, with staff supervision. Students who would like to eat meals at local families in Ramot are set up with appropriate families in the neighborhood.

Does Tomer Devorah have a curfew?

Yes. In keeping with our focus on safety and security for our students, Tomer Devorah maintains an 11:15pm curfew. Late curfew will be granted by the Eim Bayit on a case to case basis as needed.

Will Tomer Devorah students be receiving transferable college credits?

Yes. Details will be forthcoming.

How does Tomer Devorah observe Yom Ha'atzmaut?

Because our student body comes from diverse backgrounds and varying practices and customs, Tomer Devorah helps each student recognize and celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut in an appropriate manner. For example, we will provide transportation for students who desire to go to Merkaz HaRav Kook for tefillot and dancing. For those students who are interested, the school will provide an optional tiyul and picnic.

What type of post-seminary support does Tomer Devorah offer?

Tomer Devorah maintains contact with its alumnae in several unique ways:

- **Alumnae Reunions and Shabbatonim** – Tomer Devorah organizes post-seminary events and programs for its alumnae. We realize that many of the friendships and bonds formed during this year last a lifetime. We desire to facilitate the maintenance of these bonds –

both with friends and staff. Tomer Devorah staff members travel to America for an annual reunion Shabbaton and programming. Like any close-knit family, we seek to continue our relationships and connections for a lifetime.

- **Rabbinic Support Network** – While a student certainly has at her disposal countless teachers, rabbanim and mentors during her year in Israel, sometimes, once she returns home to America, she may have a hard time finding an advisor or guide. We provide our alumnae with a network of American rabbanim to whom our students can turn. Throughout the year in Israel, several American rabbanim come to the seminary, deliver workshops and are introduced to the students. Then, once a student has returned to America, she will have a familiar name and face to contact, should she choose to do so. As part of the extended “Tomer Devorah family,” these rabbanim are available specifically for Tomer Devorah alumnae.
- **Professional Network** – After returning home and continuing with their adult and professional lives, there may be times that students will seek guidance and support regarding the career they are entering into. Tomer Devorah maintains a network of successful professionals in various popular fields who are available for discussion with Tomer Devorah alumnae. These professionals can give college-age students direction and advice about their given fields of work.

What is the tuition at Tomer Devorah and what does it include?

Tuition for the year at Tomer Devorah is \$14,950. The tuition includes all dormitory costs, all academic fees, two hot catered meals a day, all Shabbatonim and Tiyulim, all school related activities, mandatory health insurance coverage for all students, free email and internet access in the student lounge and a cell phone and phone plan for the year. Books and school supplies as well as the cell phone calls are not included in tuition.

TENTATIVE CURRICULUM

CORE CURRICULUM:

Chumash – 3 mornings a week; an in-depth textual class on Chumash and *mefarshim*. Each day of class has an accompanying morning Beit Midrash period where students, either in groups or with tutors, prepare for the day's class using sources provided by the instructor.

Nach – 2 days a week; thorough textual and conceptual class on Nach.

Tefillah – 2 days a week; taking a closer look at our daily Tefillot.

Classic Jewish Thought – 2 days a week; a text-based conceptual look at the classic texts of thought and Mussar.

Parshas HaShavua – 2 days a week; “*Iyunim*” in the weekly Parsha.

Laws of Shabbat – 2 days a week; a class designed to teach the rules and mechanisms of hilchot Shabbat, going way beyond the bottom line.

Daily Halacha – 2 days a week; making the halachic process come alive for the halachos of day to day life. Topics include kashrut, brachot, and seder hayom.

Yediat Ha'aretz – Weekly; stimulating classes accompanied by multiple monthly tiyulim.

The Radiance of Shabbat – Weekly; an in-depth look delving into the non-halachic aspects of Shabbat – zemirot, oneg Shabbat, deeper meanings behind many facets of this most special of days.

Bein Adam L'Chaveiro – Weekly; a comprehensive look at the philosophy and halacha of many laws pertaining to our interactions with other people.

Contemporary Jewish Thought – Weekly; travel through the labyrinth of modern machshava.

Ma'agal HaShana – Weekly; a discussion of times of the year and special days in the calendar.

Inyanei Nashim b'Halacha viHashkafa – Weekly; sensitive, yet frank look at the unique halachot and hashkafot that set the stage for the modern Jewish woman.

Ta'amei Hamitzvot – Weekly; a look at a selection of mitzvot and how they relate to our inner, true selves.

PARTIAL LIST OF IN-CLASS ELECTIVES: [3 per semester, All electives are weekly]

Mesorat Torah SheBa'al Peh – A behind the scenes look at the history and making of the Mishna and Gemara by key members of Chazal.

The Five Megillot – Text based class revealing the beauty of the majestic, lyrical Five Megillot.

Ba'ayot Moderniyot BeHalacha – An in-depth look at complex, cutting-edge contemporary halachic questions.

Chassidut – Expositions on the enlightening sefer Nesivos Shalom.

Da Ma LeHashiv - An eye-opening look at contemporary issues facing Jewish women today.

Agadot BeChazal – Text-based class delving into the mysteries of the rich *aggadic* literature found in our Mesorah.

Pirkei Avot – Understanding the deeper meanings of the seemingly simple, yet truly profound Ethics of our Sages.

Tehillim – Analyzing and relating to the words of Dovid HaMelech.