



AVODAH INSTITUTE
for **SOCIAL CHANGE**

Hillel
International

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
January 11, 2022

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Avodah Launches New “Institute for Social Change” with Debut Cohort of Hillel Leaders
Institute to serve as proactive social justice educational hub to strengthen organizational practices and Jewish life

NEW YORK -- As Jewish institutions re-examine their organizational cultures in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, movements for racial justice, and calls for more diverse, equitable, and inclusive communities, Avodah, the 23-year-old national Jewish social justice organization, will launch a groundbreaking initiative, the [Avodah Institute for Social Change](#), with leaders from across the North American Hillel movement as its debut cohort.

The Institute helps Jewish organizations center *tzedek* (justice) as fundamental to Jewish life. In addition to cohort-based learning for Jewish communal leaders, the Institute will also serve as an impact-oriented social justice learning hub, offering educational resources, seminars and symposia, retreats, guest lectures, consulting, Jewish social justice news and commentary, and thought leadership that features the work of trailblazing leaders in the fields of social change and Jewish communal life. [You can sign up for the “The Gathering,” a monthly newsletter round-up of Jewish social justice news, commentary, and thought leadership, here.](#)

“There is a clear need and desire for Jewish communal spaces to be responsive to current events, engaged in challenging conversations, and part of broader work for social change. We need more visionary policies, more robust engagement in local and national issues, more investment in addressing the biases and inequities within our own communities, and programming that will support and deepen all of our work in sustainable and authentic ways. The Institute offers powerful resources and guidance to Jewish organizations and their leaders so that they can make true structural changes and ensure that justice remains at the heart of our communal life,” Sarra Alpert, Director of the Avodah Institute for Social Change, said. “We’re thrilled to have Hillel professionals from across North America as the Institute’s pilot cohort.”

“Hillel professionals are working every day to support Jewish college students as they pursue justice and social impact as part of their lives and Jewish journeys,” said Hillel International President and CEO Adam Lehman. “We are thrilled to be partnering with Avodah on this critical professional development opportunity to equip Hillel professionals with the resources they need to support the next generation of students as they grapple with identity formation, navigate our changing world, and work to improve it through their service and leadership.”

“I have worked in the Jewish organizational world for more than three decades, and time and time again I have seen organizations wrestle with justice issues, often not knowing where to begin. Avodah has 23 years of deep Jewish justice education, and we are excited to bring our work to the Jewish organizational world to create stronger, more just organizations, and Jewish community,” Avodah CEO Cheryl Cook said.

The Institute’s programs and materials will cover topics including methods of social change; intersectionality and cross-issue movement building; community organizing; antiracism and allyship; antisemitism and its intersections with other forms of oppression; tools for dialogue and hard conversations; and qualities of leading justly no matter the issue. Synagogue leaders from across the nation took part in the Institute’s pilot clergy workshops this past fall and more than 800 Jewish community leaders are already using the Institute’s first resources, a [Racial Justice Guide](#) for Jewish organizations and [Transformative Teshuvah: a guide for a more just world](#).

The Institute was co-created with a diverse team of Jewish nonprofit professionals and an Advisory Council of distinguished leaders in the Jewish social change field, including Co-Chairs **Rabbi Lauren Holtzblatt**, Co-Rabbi of Adas Israel Congregation, who notably eulogized Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg at the U.S. Capitol, and **Ilana Kaufman**, Executive Director of the Jews of Color Initiative, whose work sits at the center of Jewish community, philanthropy, racial equity, and justice. The Institute’s key collaborators also include veteran facilitators and non-profit leaders: Catherine Bell, Rabbi Aryeh Bernstein, Shana Bloom, Alan Edelman, Rabba Yaffa Epstein, Rachel Giattino, Beth Huppin, Isaac Luria, Danielle Natelson, Gamal Palmer, Rabbi Stephanie Ruskay, Yolanda Savage-Narva, Yoshi Silverstein. Catherine Bell and Gamal Palmer are also part of the Institute faculty team, along with Melissa Carter.

The Hillel cohort will run from January - June 2022 and Avodah is currently recruiting for additional cohorts. [Click here to learn more or to have your organization, synagogue, Board of Directors, or Jewish institution take part in a cohort or workshop.](#)

The Avodah Institute for Social Change is generously funded by Crown Family Philanthropies, The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Irving Harris Foundation, Perlin Family Foundation, and The Rakin Family.

About Avodah

Founded in 1998, Avodah develops lifelong social justice leaders whose work is informed by Jewish values and who inspire the Jewish community to work toward a more just and equitable world. Avodah’s programming provides leaders working within the Jewish community and beyond with the tools, networks, and spiritual nourishment to fight the root causes of injustice. Its many programmatic offerings include the Jewish Service Corps, the Avodah Justice Fellowship, and the new Avodah Institute for Social Change. To learn more about Avodah visit www.avodah.net and follow on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Youtube](#).

About Hillel International

Founded in 1923, Hillel has been enriching the lives of Jewish students for more than 90 years. Today, Hillel International is a global organization that welcomes students of all backgrounds and fosters an enduring commitment to Jewish life, learning and Israel. Hillel is dedicated to enriching the lives of Jewish students so that they may enrich the Jewish people and the world. As the largest Jewish student organization in the world, Hillel builds connections with emerging adults at more than 550 colleges and universities and inspires them to direct their own path. To learn more about Hillel, visit www.hillel.org and follow on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [TikTok](#).