



## Spotlight on Tiferet

By Yaffi Spodek

Many students enter Stern and Yeshiva Colleges after coming back from a year or two of study in Israel, having learned in a traditional seminary or yeshiva, or attending one of the various other programs that are now available to post high-school graduates. New institutions of learning have been cropping up annually as a response to this growing trend of “going to Israel for the year.” Prospective students have numerous options to choose from, and the decision of what school to attend is often a difficult one. This is due in part to the seemingly similar programs that each school lays claim to, and it becomes challenging to differentiate between each school and what it has to offer.

One of the newest institutions for women, [Tiferet Center for Advanced Torah Studies for Women](#), which has been more than two years in the making, opened its doors this past September. Situated in Ramat Beit Shemesh, a city in the Judean hills that surround Jerusalem, Tiferet is home this year to 48 diverse young women from 26 different high schools across the United States, Canada, and England. Tiferet defines itself as “a religious Zionist school that aims to give its students an all-encompassing Israel experience that appeals to the mind, body, and soul,” according to its mission statement. The website specifies, “We aspire to enlighten our students and broaden their understanding and knowledge of Judaism, as well as inspire them towards a closer connection to Torah, Am Yisrael, Eretz Yisrael and Medinat Yisrael.”

“Tiferet,” which literally means glory or splendor, is so named because of a kabbalistic concept associated with the idea of beauty, harmony, and the integration of many different components coming together. Found in a verse in Proverbs, it is connected to the idea of man’s self-achievement. The *rosh midrasha*, Dean **Rabbi Azriel Rosner**, considers the Tiferet experience and the Israel experience in general a time for students to go out on their own and “figure out how to take the Torah and integrate it into your life.” He considers the year in Israel “a necessary part of Jewish education” which students take very seriously, because they have seen the effects that it has on life.

Last year Tiferet received over 200 applications but chose to accept only 48 women because Tiferet “wanted the first year to be close, to be very unified,” says Rabbi Rosner, and having all the students be able to travel on one coach bus was important to achieve that end. Since 90% of the teachers live in Ramat Beit Shemesh, this allows students the opportunity to build strong and personal relationships with the faculty, and according to Rabbi Rosner, “Students can drop by their teachers’ houses on a whim—that’s the real advantage of being in Ramat Beit Shemesh.” The environment of Ramat Beit Shemesh also gives students the benefit of being able to concentrate on their learning and really focus on their personal growth, since they won’t be exposed to the distractions of Jerusalem, where the majority of the other women’s institutions are located.

Rabbi Rosner also teaches in addition to being the dean of the institution. He feels that he “would never want to be an administrator that doesn’t teach—it’s a valuable time to connect with students.” Tiferet offers classes in Bible, Prophets, Jewish Law, Prayer and Jewish Philosophy, and Ethics, in addition to optional classes in Jewish History, Zionism, *Chassidut*, and Talmud. There are also programs on defending the positions of the Israeli government and combating anti-Semitism, which enables students to acquire the practical skills needed to help them after their year in Israel is over. The faculty is comprised of young and dynamic teachers and rabbis, who are mainly in their 30’s and who have had previous experience teaching in different yeshivot and seminaries in Israel. Tiferet’s website adds, “The curriculum combines exciting and interactive *shiurim* with independent beit midrash study to maximize growth in our students.”

In addition to the regular courses, Tiferet plans trips periodically, traveling all around the country and allowing students to appreciate the beauty of the land by exploring its rich history, and creates another setting for the students to interact and strengthen their bonds with other students and with teachers. Ramat Beit Shemesh’s location also allows for day trips to nearby landmarks, hikes, and national parks. These excursions help students take their Israel experience beyond the walls of the classrooms, and allow all that they’ve learned to become tangible to them, thereby deepening their love of Israel. Additionally, *chessed* programs are designed to forge a connection between students and members of the community. By visiting hospitals and retirement homes and helping immigrants and terror victims, the importance of the values of *chessed* and inter-personal relationships become a fundamental part of each student’s life.

All Tiferet students must be “fully committed to Torah and *mitzvo*” and adhere to the proper laws of *tzniut* both in dress and behavior. When recruiting, Tiferet looks for women who are “serious, and not just looking for a year off.” However, they do offer a variety of levels of *shiurim* in order to cater to each student’s abilities and learning style.

Most of the women studying at Tiferet this year plan to attend Stern College next year. Due to a mandatory waiting period for new institutions, Tiferet is not as-of-yet on the YU Israel Program, but it hopes to be accepted after the three-year period concludes.