

## Summer Institute 2018

### Faculty Elective I

Tuesday, August 21, 11:00 AM

Do God's Words Belong on Our Bodies?: Gender, Mitzvot and Tefillin  
with **Rabbi Aviva Richman**

Rabbi Aviva is an incredible teacher. I so appreciated that she provided us with a bunch of text and managed to walk us through it all so we could see what's out there. She managed to cover a lot in not that much time without making it feel rushed, and she was responsive to the group's diverse text skills and desire to stay together as a group. This session was really powerful for me and I'll be referencing that source sheet for many years.

I very much enjoyed Rav Aviva's session. I found her to be thought-provoking, generous and very receptive to pushback.

Rabbi Richman brought fantastic collection of sources, and we had a really thoughtful discussion-- I would have cut the chevruta portion just to have a bit more time to go through some of the many sources and ideas we didn't get to touch.

This was a great class. Rabbi Aviva's teaching style is warm and engaging, and her content was careful, meaningful--and at times challenging. I was taken by Rabbi Aviva's love for the text, even those which

I was disappointed with this session because I didn't think it addressed any of the questions that were brought up. Could have also used more modern and contemporary sources to discuss the topic. I heard Rabbi Richman is a great teacher so perhaps it was a lack of time management?

Wonderful session! Aviva is an excellent and thoughtful teacher. Learned about some of the history and ideas in the background of Tefillin.

I found this session meaningful and enriching. It didn't feel long enough!

I felt that this session assumed a significant amount of background knowledge that I did not have. I also felt that she set a goal that she never got to, and it was the goal (the relevance for Israel today) that I thought was particularly interesting and compelling.

Rabbi Richman has a persuasive style of presentation that is very welcoming. What is more, I appreciate that she brought a number of texts that outlined the intellectual development of various positions regarding women wrapping tefillin. Even though she did not advocate clearly for a "winning interpretation", the implied message I took from the lesson is that our tradition shows that our current halakhic realities were not inevitable developments. As such, maybe we can open ourselves up to the possibility of alternative historical interpretations that would lead to greater egalitarianism.

I loved the teacher but didn't always follow how the texts / conversation related to the subject. I felt it was pitched at a high level.

I loved Rabbi Aviva's framing of the session and the time we spent in chevruta looking at texts. However, I came away feeling that we hadn't gotten into the meat of the topic, which was a bit disappointing. It might have been better to spend a little less

time on texts and more on practical repercussions of the halacha and traditions we have inherited about tefillin and gender.

I found Rabbi Richman's session to require a certain amount of previous knowledge that I just didn't have, and so it was a little inaccessible; it felt like a very deep dive into halachic questions and texts (on the question of if women can wear tefillin), whereas I was expecting something more general about the relationship between the very idea of wearing "God's words on our bodies" and problems therein. I think I would have been happier with a more general philosophical approach to the question as opposed to the nitty-gritty of the halacha.

It was very interesting and Aviva was a great teacher.