**Recommendation for Ms. Cecilia Haendler to Receive the Azrieli International Postdoctoral Fellowship**

Ms. Cecilia Haendler is a promising scholar with vast potential who is currently at the beginning of her career. She recently submitted her doctorate, supervised by Prof. Tal Ilan, on the topic of “Women-Related Images as Metaphorical Source Domain in Tannaitic Corpora,” and it is expected to be approved soon. Cecilia has already proven herself to be a scholar of outstanding academic excellence with impressive command of the disciplines in which she works. In my opinion, she will be a leading scholar in the future. I strongly recommend supporting and encouraging her scholarly development by awarding her the Azrieli International Postdoctoral Fellowship.

I first met Cecilia several years ago at an international Jewish Studies conference in which she gave an excellent talk. I subsequently invited her to speak at the Tosefta Studies international conference held at Bar-Ilan University in 2019 and to join a panel I organized at the Association for Jewish Studies international conference in 2020. At both conferences, her talks were highly praised. Review of her publications supports my view that she is a scholar of outstanding academic capabilities.

Cecilia’s doctorate addresses gender images in tannaitic literature (rabbinic literature from the first several centuries of the Common Era). In her doctorate and her articles, Cecilia critically examines texts from a variety of rabbinic works from both tannaitic and later literature. She makes intelligent and sophisticated use of philological considerations pertaining to the wording and development of texts and examines the relationship between texts from different periods, including extra-rabbinic literature from the classical era. All these enable her to point out meaningful and interesting new interpretations regarding various aspects of gender in rabbinic literature, a field in which significant work has already been done and is expected, in my estimation, to become increasingly central in upcoming years. Cecilia is thus well-situated to contribute greatly to an academic field expected to expand significantly in upcoming years.

Cecilia also took part in the research project “A Digital Synopsis of the Mishnah

and Tosefta” and in the project of composing a feminist commentary to various tractates of the Mishna and the Talmud. Her participation in these two projects further reflects her great expertise in text-critical work with rabbinic texts and her ability to do innovative research in classical research in rabbinic literature as well as to break new ground in the field.

The number of academic articles that Cecilia has published even before the completion of her doctorate (6!), including articles in excellent journals (such as *Journal of Ancient Judaism*, *SBL*, and *Melilah*), as well as the number of lectures she has given (16!), including at top-rated international conferences (such as the conferences of the Association for Jewish Studies, the World Congress of Jewish Studies, Society of Biblical Literature, the European Association for Jewish Studies, and the British Association for Jewish Studies) are further indications of her academic excellence. Cecilia has demonstrated the ability, motivation and focus to take an active and successful part in the academic world.

Cecilia’s proposed post-doctoral research project is interesting and innovative. She seeks to examine how biblical verses are used in the Tosefta and has already pointed out an interesting phenomenon. Scholars of rabbinic literature have noted how biblical verses play an extensive and central role in the various disciplines that make up the genre of *midrash halakha,* while verses are cited infrequently and play only a minor role in the Mishna. The Tosefta is generically very similar to the Mishna, and Cecilia proposes examining broad parts of the Tosefta in light of the findings of an initial study that indicate a much broader use of verses in a wider variety of roles in the Tosefta as compared to the Mishna. This is an important research question that has not yet been investigated and which has the potential to shed light on the nature of the Tosefta as well as the processes of the development of halakhic material and its presentation in Tannaitic literature, which may be more complex than has previously been described by scholars.

In this project, Cecilia will also examine the relationships between the text of the verses quoted in the Tosefta and how they appear in the Masoretic text and in early biblical translations, paying attention to the connections between the versions and the possible directions of influence. She will also examine the role of gender in the use of biblical characters and in the presentation of the *derashot* (midrashic interpretations) on the biblical verses. On all these fronts, I expect that Cecilia’s work will arrive at very interesting conclusions that will resonate throughout the scholarly world.

The collaboration and guidance Cecilia will receive from the Bar-Ilan University Talmud Department will greatly assist and enrich her research. If she is awarded the Azrieli International Postdoctoral Fellowship, I will serve as her advisor, and one of my primary fields of study is the Tosefta, its textual traditions, its relationship to similar rabbinic texts, its internal structure, and the modes of its transmission. As part of my work on the Tosefta, I will soon publish, together with Prof. Adiel Shermer, a critical version with an introduction of Tosefta *Neziqin* for tractates *Sanhedrin–Horayot*. As a scholar of the Tosefta, I can confidently say that the study Cecilia proposes has the potential to result in innovative and meaningful insights. My research addresses a variety of questions that touch on those of Cecilia’s proposed study, and I look forward to a fertile collaboration. Some other scholars at Bar-Ilan are engaged in projects that are close to Cecilia’s proposed study, including scholars of tannaitic literature, Midrashic literature, biblical textual transmission, and gender. In my estimation, Bar-Ilan will be an excellent place to support the proposed study and the continued expansion of Cecilia’s academic horizons.

All these considerations lead me to the opinion that Cecilia is exceptionally deserving of the Azrieli International Postdoctoral Fellowship and that the fellowship will assist her in taking a place at the forefront of scholarship over the upcoming years in several important and developing fields. I warmly recommend awarding her the fellowship.