Project Title:

Ve'Haguta: And You Shall Ponder

**Grant Purpose**

*Please briefly describe (in 3-5 sentences) how the grant funds would be used.*

*(Maximum 200 words.)*

The grant will be used for the deepening of Ve’Haguta’s expanding network of Haredim, pulled between the two worlds of insularity and liberalism, and seeking a third way. Four types of activities will take place this coming year: 1. the continuation of our monthly virtual Beit Midrash on Zoom, which has become a focal point for deep thought and rich conversation, as well as spin-offs from the Beit Midrash (chats, podcasts) that will expand their reach beyond the actual events; 2. Two 20-person 2-day retreats for Haredi leaders, devoted to deep thinking and networking, rooted in Ve’Haguta’s groundbreaking initial intellectual work and following up on our successful pilot this year; 3. A new, in-person bi-weekly Beit Midrash for “graduates” of the retreats, devoted to ideas and issues that sit at the center of the search for balancing the two worlds (for example, women’s role in the community, the role of Haredi values in the larger society, the tensions between pluralism and Truth); 4. A retreat for the growing community of the Beit Midrash, limited to 20 participants, intended to build an ongoing network that shares a set of values and a common mission.

*All currency fields must be entered as* **USD$***.*

*Current Project / Program Budget Amount*

Project / Program Budget: $0

Requested Grant Amount Total: $50,000

Proposed Start Date: September 2021

Proposed End Date: September 2022

*Are you applying for multi-year support?*

Yes / No: No

## Organizational Goals



*Please describe your current* ***organizational******goals*** *(up to 5). For each goal, please briefly describe the activities you will undertake to achieve the goal. For the purposes of this question, the Foundation wants to understand what goals you have set at the organizational level that will set the direction for and guide the overall work of your board and employees. These goals may be strategic, tactical, or operational.*

Goal 1: Articulating the ideas and vision of a Democracy rooted in the Common Good: how does Israel, embracing the deep diversity of its manifold identities, build a shared society that is "good enough" for everyone.

Strategies / Activities

1. A joint Initiative with the Van Leer Institute on [The Challenge of Living Together](https://www.vanleer.org.il/en/the-challenge-of-living-together/): academic and activist working groups on topics ranging from the meaning of modest liberalism, education towards tolerance outside of the liberal matrix, what we can learn from populism, thinking differently about peace, the limits of racism in understanding Ethiopians in Israel and African refugees in the Jewish State. Publications—books, readers, and syllabi are being written and compiled.
2. A team of Shaharit Fellows from the variety of its projects have written a [multitude of essays](https://www.shaharit.org.il/%D7%9E%D7%90%D7%9E%D7%A8%D7%99-%D7%A9%D7%97%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%AA/) and papers on the issues of living together well. The Fellows op. ed. pieces appear regularly throughout the Israeli press and electronic media.

Goal 2: Nurturing a community of Leadership for the Common Good —creating a leadership within each of Israel's central sociological identities that can "work across the aisle," identifying allies and partnerships in advocating for a Common Good future.

Strategies / Activities

1. Our 120 Leadership Program brings together leadership from all identities in Israel, forging a network that now numbers 120 individuals, including two Members of Knesset and ten members of city councils, who search for common ground and rely on their connections with one another.
2. A variety of leadership programs in each of the central sociologies of Israeli society, forging a leadership that has one foot within their community and their other foot stepping out into the larger society. Leadership programs are currently running for a. Religious Zionists (*Arevim zeh l’zeh*); b. Israeli Arabs (*Arkan*); c. Liberal human-rights activists; d. senior partners in the Masorati network; and e. Haredim (Ve’Haguta).

Goal 3: At the grassroots level, creating communities of activists that cross sociological divides and work together for a common future, bringing the Common Good vision to practice in the lived lives of tens of thousands of Israel.

Strategies / Activities

1. Through our relationship-based community organizing program, training teams of grassroots leaders who forge new partnerships that work together to bring social change to their communities. We are presently working in twelve communities that stretch throughout the country, with community organizations that bring together activists across the divides, who have worked together to win victories that benefit all—from special needs programs, to support for local businesses, to renovating vandalized parks in deprived areas.

Goal 4: Networking the burgeoning list of initiatives throughout Israel on both a local and national level that are loosely identified with a Common Good agenda, into a community with shared vision and practice.

Strategies / Activities

1. Shaharit initiatives rooted in low-institutional ego, and always partnering with like-minded initiatives, creating a community and making the whole greater than the sum of its parts.
2. An annual two-day retreat for representatives from like-minded organizations, focused on ideas and networking.

## Program / Project Support



**Project Description**

***Please describe the specific project for which you are requesting support. Please make sure to address the following:***

1. *What is the specific need or problem you are trying to address through the project for which you are requesting support?*
2. *Please list up to three goals for the project and describe the activities you will take to accomplish these goals. These should be goals you are hoping to achieve in the short-term (i.e., within the period of the grant).*

In the past decade and a half, Haredi society has been diversifying in a way that finds growing numbers of Haredim occupied with matters that did not appear on the Haredi menu of life in Israel’s first decades. More and more Haredim serve in the Israel Defense Forces or perform civilian service, take vocational or academic studies, and integrate into Israeli society through the job market. These integration processes, however, have not been sweepingly successful due to the controversial place in their community of Haredim who integrate and the small numbers of people involved.

One reason for this is that the integration processes are technical only, manifested sociologically and practically but lacking the ideological fundaments that would justify this shift. Thus, integration-minded Haredim today face two choices: either to live in the inconceivable open space between the “neo-Haredi” way of life and the conservative and separatist beliefs on which they were raised, or to adopt thoroughly liberal, Western, and general Israeli positions. If they choose the latter option, apart from living in ways that diverge from those accepted in their community, the question is in what sense they remain Haredi. Indeed, in most cases, they lose their place in the community and forfeit their chances of influencing its ways.

This being the case, Ve’Haguta has made it its goal to offer Haredim a way of thinking that is relevant for the challenges that the community faces today—providing venues where the Haredi community’s grand ideas can be discussed and supporting current sociological processes by means of ideological contents, thus ensuring that they will remain an inseparable and sustainable part of Haredi Jewry.

In its first two years, Ve’Haguta drew up and disseminated relevant proposals that addressed the essence of contemporary Haredism from an inside perspective. In the September 2021–September 2022 activity year, Ve'Haguta will focus on the question of the role of Haredi Jewry vis-à-vis the Jewish and Israeli spheres in which it acts.

It is important to deal with the role of Haredi Jewry due to the realization that the absence of a Haredi intellectual conversation thus far traces, among other factors*,* to the processes that Haredi society is going through. On the one hand, dominant ideas in the Haredi community (the society of learners, a small minority society driven by a sense of endangerment) have become irrelevant; on the other hand, exposure to today’s Western and post-liberal world has left an ideological void because most Western values are unfit for adoption by people who lead a Haredi way of life. Between these two value worlds, however, there is room to put forward a clear statement about what current Haredism can offer—a statement in which the Haredim are neither a “problem” nor something in need of a solution but rather, in a certain sense, a positive augury. Haredism has what to offer the Israeli and Jewish world by the very fact of its being part of the diversity of that world—an offer that current Haredim are proud of, believe in, and act toward. Examples are the attitude toward women and the arena of values that it occupies, family and its values, community and its values, the place of knowledge and learning in the fabric of organic life, and Shabbat as a structure that accommodates worlds of values. Furthermore, after the value position is taken, the encounter of different values that occurs should be approached without coercion, competition, and judgmentalism.

Dealing with this issue should be viewed as the construction of a vision, so to speak, of the optimal way in which Haredim live and act in multicultural spheres from a position of involvement, responsibility, and modesty.

This engagement will be undertaken with the help of three different instruments:

* + - 1. Creating and working through grand intellectual ideas:

The Likhat’hila Virtual Beit Midrash—a study center that convenes at regular times and hosts diverse thinkers from the Haredi community and elsewhere, personages who have broad philosophical, intellectual, and Torah knowledge. Most of them have advanced academic degrees and authority in the relevant realities and their interpretation. Members of the Haredi community, male and female, are invited to participate in the Beit Midrash with the goal of sustaining an effervescent and active intellectual community. Likhat’hila offers various series of study activities that revolve around the axes of tension on which the Haredi identity and ideology run. Each series begins with a brief lecture in which the main speaker presents his or her argument about the issue. Afterwards, the participants discuss and work through the matter together. The meetings take place on Zoom, are recorded, and are uploaded to a dedicated area of content on the Kav 400 site. A teaser is uploaded to YouTube. The encounters take place and are disseminated on Haredi digital media.

A diverse community of some sixty regular participants has gathered around the sessions, responding to and identifying with the contents. They are joined by additional young participants—some 500 Haredim altogether in the eight sessions of the Beit Midrash that have been held thus far. Around twenty additional study encounters are foreseen in the September 2021–September 2022 period, with approximately 1,500 Haredim expected to take part.

A canonic anthology on Haredi thinking: Ve’Haguta will collect texts by Haredi intellectuals of the past eighty years such as Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz (the Hazon Ish), Rabbi Elazar Menachem Man Shach, etc. The result will be a digital collection that will form the basis of the current Haredi intellectual discussion.

The initiative reflects the realization that the last time the Haredi community enunciated a clear ideology was when it was established some seventy years ago, if not before. Since then, the community has undergone much sociological change, making it necessary to offer a systematic ideological doctrine that is relevant to the challenges that it faces today. An up-to-date intellectual proposal has no right to exist unless it relies directly on earlier writings; also, however, it needs to be interpreted by a contemporary reading. The ideology in question flows from Haredism but must be influenced by events in its surroundings. The anthology will serve as an infrastructure for Ve’Haguta’s diverse educational activities and will be uploaded for unrestricted use on the internet.

2. Workshop seminars for influencers:

 The seminars will propose Ve’Haguta’s thinking as a prism through which the Haredi civil calling may be viewed. Since an effervescent civil society already exists in this sphere, it is easier to amplify influence by acting vis-à-vis leaders of public opinion.

 Although there are no few leadership programs in this area (Meldel, Maoz, etc.), they do not appear to be based on a Haredi ideology; instead, their main effect is to intensify the segregation of identities. Therefore, the Ve’Haguta proposal seeks deep reconciliation of the challenges that the exposure to outside ideological worlds has produced. The first seminar took place in March 2021 and three additional seminars between July 2021 and June 2022 are foreseen. In these short and focused two-day activities, the Ve’Haguta ideas are used as theological tools that nourish, consolidate, and expand the participants’ influencing actions. Different Haredi civil leaders (men and women) take part in each seminar, bringing the total number participants to around sixty. (The last seminar, to be held in the spring of 2022, will be intended for the entire group, pooling the sixty participants together.

3. Ideological Beit Midrash for Haredi influencers:

 After participating in the seminars, the “alumni” will be invited to monthly study encounters where Haredi canon texts will be worked through from the Ve’Haguta perspective. Here, too, current ideas—the role of women in the community, the role of Haredi values in broader society, and the tension between pluralism and truth, to name only a few—will be promoted for action by the Haredi influencers. These sessions will serve as a forum for discourse and discussion surrounding the use of current Haredi theology. Additional seminars every few months will enrich the monthly study sessions and produce a community of peers that speaks a common language and pools its ideas in order to strengthen and assure social change.

**Optional**: If you have a logic model for the project, please upload it to the document repository below.

Enter description here

**Program / Project Alignment**

*Please briefly explain how your proposed project fits in with the organizational goals that you described above.*

Ve’Haguta is the Haredi wing of Shaharit’s activities. It nurtures ideas within the Haredi framework (and indeed, the Van Leer Institute continues to be thought-partners in the project); it is building leadership within the Haredi community that reaches out to the rest of Israeli society, similar to our other leadership projects (Rachelli Ibenboim is a graduate of the first cohort of our 120 program, paving the way for other Haredim to participate in Shaharit’s flagship program); and it is part of our network that both feeds and is fed by our Haredi work (Malki Rotner, now partnering with Rachelli in running Ve’Haguta, emerged from our community organizing work in Ashdod, became a Shaharit Intellectual Fellow in our ideas and vision work, and through these paths, became a natural fit for leading Ve’Haguta).

**Anticipated Challenges**

*What challenges do you anticipate in achieving the goals you've set out above? How are you planning to mitigate those challenges?*

1. The task that Ve’Haguta undertook as the focal point of its efforts in the July 2021–June 2022 year—dealing with the place of the Haredi community in Israel vis-à-vis its surroundings—may present a challenge and cause antagonism now more than ever. The coronavirus crisis has created a deep, hemorrhaging, and alienating schism between the Haredi community and Israeli society. In certain cases, the very fact of tackling this issue may be perceived as disconnected from and irrelevant to a Haredi society that experienced hate and antipathy from the rest of society in Israel. We at Ve’Haguta, however, believe that now of all times, the topic should not be neglected and that, indeed, it should be brought to the surface. If we fail to deal with the trauma while it is still fresh and draw the communities closer, the schism may widen and become so extreme as to become hard to cope with at all. We foresee the difficulty and are interested in surmounting it.
2. Underlying Ve’Haguta’s endeavors is an essential difficulty that arises in any action that centers on dealing with ideas: the relevance of the ideas for the practical world and the extent of their influence on people who do not occupy themselves with grand ideas but lead mundane lives. Ve’Haguta encountered this challenge in its first years. The way to contend with it is to identify a target population somewhere in the middle, people who are neither philosophers nor intellectuals but definitely perceive reality from an overview—social changers. By reducing the whole to its parts, one may claim that it is possible, by meaningful experience, to find room for ideological ideas among this population, especially if these ideas may support their actions and social goals. These social changers may become ambassadors of sorts, assimilating the ideas among the target populations and benefactees of the programs they run. In this manner, what Ve’Haguta has to offer will be widely diffused.

## Key Personnel



*Please provide up to 3 bios of key personnel involved in implementing and managing this program/project.* (Click on + to add.)

### Click the plus sign to add key personnel.

### Add

## Outcomes and Collaboration



Malki Rotner | Married + 3 | Belzer Hassid who lives in Ashdod | Runs an employment referral center for Haredim under the auspices of the Israel Ministry of Labor and Social services, for advancement of employment of Haredim | Runs the Likhat’hila Beit Midrash for Haredi thinking. An activist in Haredi and “Hassidic” feminism, promotes Torah study and access to the Jewish bookshelf for Haredi women.

Rachelli Ibenboim | Social Entrepreneur | Rachelli is a social entrepreneur who deals with the status of Haredi women and the general integration of the Haredi community into Israeli society. In addition to running Ve’Haguta as Head of Haredi Initiatives at the Shaharit Institute, Rachelli is also a senior Advisor at Telem, a Strategy and Project Management organization for Haredi Integration. She is also the Founder and Chair of Movilot an Employment Leadership program for Outstanding Academic Haredi Women. Rachelli is the former CEO of the Meir Panim welfare organization. Rachelli has a Bachelor's degree in Communication and Sociology from the Open University and a Master's degree in History and Sociology from the University of Haifa. She was named one of the 50 most influential women in 2020 in Israeli society by the Globes newspaper.

**Measuring Outcomes**

*What changes or results would you expect to see if you are successful (i.e., the vision of success)?*

*How will you know if you are accomplishing what you've set out to accomplish (i.e., indicators you are looking at)?*

*What outcomes will you measure to determine your organization's success (i.e., specific measurable quantitative or qualitative outcomes)?*

*Please discuss these outcomes for the short-term (within the grant period); the medium term (3-5 years) as well as your long term vision of success.*

If this grant is for general operating support, please answer the question based on the organizational goals you identified above. If this grant is for project support, please answer the question for the specific proposed project.

**Vision**

Ve’Haguta envisages a Haredi community that is responsible, proactive, and involved in the Israeli and Jewish spheres—a community aware of its strength, mission, and role, and one that talks it, a community of doers, tinkers, and people of Torah and good sense.

**Objectives and Metrics of Success**

1. The anthology

a. The complete anthology should be online by September 2021.

b. It should be downloaded at least 100 times per year.

2. The Likhat’hila Beit Midrash

a. 20 encounters per year;

b. around 60 participants on average;

c. 1,500 unique participants per year;

d. an average of 120 views of online documentation of the encounters per year.

3. Influencers’ activity, seminars, and monthly encounters

a. 3 different seminars per year;

b. 20 participants in each seminar;

c. 10 joint study encounters per year.

**Organizational Collaboration**

*To what extent does your organization collaborate or partner with others to leverage resources and increase the impact of your work?*

*How do you decide whether and with whom to partner?*

***If this grant is for project support, please answer the question for the specific proposed project***

**Van Leer**

After previously cooperating with the Van Leer Institute management in formulating its proposal for resolving the underlying tensions of Haredi Jewry, Ve’Haguta has been cooperating on an ongoing basis by consulting with Van Leer about the contents that it proposes to offer. The professional team at Van Leer advises Ve’Haguta on main axes of content at the Likhat’hila Virtual Beit Midrash, guest intellectuals and presentations at the Beit Midrash, and the canonic contents of the anthology.

Van Leer also enriches Ve’Haguta by sharing its copious experience in creating and organizing knowledge and offering it to the world of action.

**Kav 400**

Ve’Haguta carefully chooses its options in connecting with the community and disseminating its contents. We chose to collaborate with the Haredi digital-content platform Kav 400 as the distribution and assimilation infrastructure of our virtual Beit Midrash. We chose it both because it a bold, sincere, and young site with quite a bit of traffic and because it was founded by Shmuel Drilman, a veteran social activist and a partner in the Social Activists Forum, the historical cradle of the Ve’Haguta project. Our cooperation developed naturally; today, Kav 400 makes a continual contribution to the design and distribution of invitations to encounters, operating the encounters, and the content areas of the site.

***Aspeklaria***

In Ve’Haguta’s founding year, Rabbi Yosef Kaminer joined the program team and helped to enunciate the underlying tensions in current Haredi Jewry and try to resolve them. His name appears on the Torah-centered book that was published pursuant to the activity. The relationship between *Aspeklaria*, which caters to conservative readers, and Ve’Haguta and its collection continues with monthly meetings for mutual consultation, sharing insights from frontline activity, and strategic partnership in the grand task—guiding the Haredi community to responsibility for its place and its future.

## Evaluation



*Do you currently evaluate the effectiveness of your organization or program?*

Evaluation Y/N:

### Geographic FocusAdd

No Geographic Focus records have been added.

## Additional Questions



*Please answer the following question or questions below.*

### Additional Questions - Full Proposal

* 1. Please share with us the progression of the program from laying the ideological ground to initial dissemination through change agents. :
* 2. How will the ideological framework help change agents reflect and/or incorporate the ideas into their professional lives

**Progression of the program**

Ve’Haguta’s first year of activity ended with considerable success. Its foundational ideological activity led to the presentation of dialectic ideas for use in resolving the underlying tension of Haredi Jewry and in creating a language that provides these ideas with tools. At the onset of the second year of activity, in which the intention was to engage in influencing and disseminating the ideas via training programs, the coronavirus crisis broke out and curtailed our ability to meet and take action as we had planned. Conversely, the changes that the Haredi community underwent at this time readied the ground for action of the Ve’Haguta kind. Ve’Haguta’s program was suspended during the lockdown, it being understood that the work plan would have to take a stepwise leap forward in the post-pandemic period.

During the moratorium on activity, the program leaders fine-tuned their strategic thinking and improved the channels of dissemination. The following was accomplished at this time:

1. To maintain uninterrupted visibility in the Haredi sphere, Ve’Haguta published bimonthly articles and current opinion pieces on print and digital media, written by members of its staff, at regular intervals throughout the period.

2. The Torah-centered materials that underlie the Ve’Haguta message were reworked for use in a Haredi philosophy book. Drafts of the book were presented to prominent rabbis in the Haredi community. After the contents were discussed and worked through, written approbations were obtained—“calling cards” for the book in the legitimate Haredi sphere. The book was published in September 2020.

3. A Ve’Haguta site was designed and set up. It includes the ideological bodies of content that were created in the founding year.

4. The Ve’Haguta strategic work plan was formulated and brought up to date. Underlying it are two basic insights that came into sharper focus during the pandemic:

a. The first pertains to the experience amassed in running the early dissemination program and the understanding that creating a one-size-fits-all solution for the diverse Haredi sociologies that exist today keeps each group from feeling at ease with the demarche and making the most of it. As a practical reflection of this insight, the dissemination activities were divided between two main target populations—

1. The Haredi silent majority, typified by a conservative point of view that still contemplates everything outside with trepidation. The Torah-focused book that we published is meant for them.

2. Haredim who are exposed to the Israeli sphere in some manner—by means of workplaces, studies, or general knowledge. After having been exposed to a liberal discourse, they find it hard to connect it with their Haredi identity and to bridge the identities. Most of Ve’Haguta’s strategic program is geared to members of this group.

 Notably, we had to choose between these target populations because a strong appeal to one of them creates the need to “cauterize” when we turn to the other. The choice is sometimes such that, for example, a major difficulty arose when we affirmed change in women’s status in Haredi society while making inroads in the Haredi mainstream. This led to a personnel change at Ve’Haguta, as Malki Rotner replaced Yosef Kaminer as the content manager.

b. The second insight pertains to the deep processes that Haredi society experienced during the pandemic: individualism and fissures in trusting the established leadership and its underlying grand ideas. This brought us to the realization that there is no longer any need to choose benefactees who would communicate the ideas to attentive ears as the earlier work plan had dictated. Instead, the ground has been prepared for giving individual Haredim the choice of whether to consume and identify with Ve’Haguta’s kind of content—and, in turn, to create direct influence on much broader populations. This insight found expression in a direct appeal to young Haredim via online encounters.

 Immediately after the moratorium, the updated program was applied: the Torah-centered volume came out under a separate brand, a Beit Midrash that was meant to be virtual from the outset was established, and activities for influencers—a Ve’Haguta seminar in the desert and a monthly series of meetings—were launched.

**Relevance of Ve’Haguta’s ideas for the changes under way:**

Haredi influencers meet at Ve’Haguta to converse, conceptualize, and valorize the great change that all of us share. By building a network of influencers+, Ve’Haguta creates a platform, sets thinking in certain directions, and engineers a culture of discourse in which the sociological area of concern develops ideological possibilities by itself. The infrastructure work that was done—drafting the first Ve’Haguta proposal for resolving tensions, anthologizing a set of canon texts, and documenting the encounters at the Beit Midrash —reflects ways of thinking and use of language to frame lives worthy of Haredim who live in the State of Israel and are integral parts of it.

The social influencers, online and at Ve’Haguta, are not steered toward any particular use of the ideas and the ideological and spiritual worlds that they acquire. This is left to their personal needs and interpretations. The uses range from strengthening their inner sanction for the introduction and justification of change to integrating Ve’Haguta’s ideas into educational processes in the various programs, disseminating them in those settings, and, finally, joining the stratum of Haredi civic leaders that is aware of itself, its role, and its responsibility for itself.

The encounter of ideas and influences that Ve’Haguta ordains comes from the realization that society should neither change nor progress without grand ideas that call for this, and without inspiring leaders who provide vision and hope.

D O C U M E N T U P L O A D

## Application Document Repository



#### REQUIRED SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS - UPLOAD

The following documents are required for your application to be considered.

**Organizational Budget**

*Please upload a* detailed, line item, sources (revenue) and uses (expense) organizational budget *that corresponds to the period for which you are requesting funding. Please include a* year-to-date figures in US dollars*, donor names, and amounts and specify if the source amount has been Committed (C), Anticipated (A), or Requested (R).*

*Budget documents must be uploaded in an Excel spreadsheet. Please do not upload budgets in Word or PDF format.*

* Organizational Budget

**Program / Project Budget**

*Please upload a* detailed, line item, sources (revenue) and uses (expense) program/project budget *that corresponds to the period for which you are requesting funding. Please include a year-to-date* figures in US dollars, donor names, and amounts and specify if the source amount has been Committed (C), Anticipated (A), or Requested (R).

*Budget documents must be uploaded in an Excel spreadsheet. Please do not upload budgets in Word or PDF format.*

* Program / Project Budget

**To upload documents, click on the plus + icon *next to the document type above: this will open the document upload window.* After uploaded, your documents will be saved to the Application Documents Repository below.**

#### OPTIONAL SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS - UPLOAD

Please upload the following documents if they are applicable to your organization.

**Logic Model**

*If you have developed a logic model or a theory of change and would like to share it with the Foundation, please upload to the Documents Repository below.*

**Strategic Plan**

*If you have developed an organizational strategic or business plan in the last three years, please upload it to the Document Repository below.*

* Logic Model
* Strategic Plan

**To upload documents, click on the plus + icon *next to the document type above: this will open the document upload window.* After uploaded, your documents will be saved to the Application Documents Repository below.**