**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 path. She recently submitted her doctorate, under the guidance of 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 outstanding academic excellence and impressive command of the fields of knowledge in which she deals, and in my opinion, she will be among the leading scholars in upcoming years. It is therefore highly worthwhile to encourage and support her by providing 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 consequently invited her to speak at the international Tosefta Studies 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 impressive and outstanding academic capabilities.

The field of study Cecilia dealt with in her doctorate is gender images in tannaitic literature (rabbinic literature from the first several centuries of the Common Era). In her doctorate, like in her articles, Cecilia critically examines texts from a variety of rabbinic texts from the classical era, tannaitic and later literature, through intelligent and sophisticated use of philological considerations pertaining to the wording and development of texts and 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 pertaining to gender aspects in rabbinic literature, a field that has already benefited from meaningful contributions and is expected, in my estimation, to become more and more central in upcoming years. As such Cecilia is at a point where she can contribute greatly to an academic field expected to develop greatly in upcoming years.

In addition, Cecilia took part in the research project “A Digital Synopsis of the Mishnah

and Tosefta” and in the project of writing a feminist interpretation to various tractates of the Mishna and the Talmud. Her participation in these two projects further reflects her great expertise in critical work with rabbinic texts and her abilities to innovate both in classical aspects of rabbinic literature research and in new and groundbreaking aspects.

Cecilia’s academic excellence is also expressed in the her great amount of academic publications already before the completion of her doctorate (6!), including articles in excellent journals (such as *Journal of Ancient Judaism*, *SBL*, and *Melilah*) and in the very large number of lectures she has give in various contexts (16!), including first-order international conferences (such as those of the Association for Jewish Studies, World Congress of Jewish Studies, Society of Biblical Literature, European Association for Jewish Studies, and British Association for Jewish Studies). On this matter Cecilia has certainly proven her impressive ability and motivation and her willingness and capabilities in taking an active and successful part in the academic world.

The proposed post-doc research project is interesting and innovative. Cecilia seeks to examine the use made of biblical verses in the Tosefta and has already pointed out an interesting phenomenon. Rabbinic literature scholars have pointed out significant differences between the great amount of use of verses and their role in the genre of Midrash Halakha through the various disciplines represented in it, on the one hand, and the relatively limited use and minor role of verse in the Mishna, on the other hand. The Tosefta as a genre is closer to the Mishna, and here Cecilia proposes examining broad parts of the Tosefta in light of the findings that arose during an initial study that indicate much broader use of verses in the Tosefta compared to the Mishna, and their use for a wider variety of roles than in the Mishna. This is an important research question that has not yet been examined and which has the potential to teach about the Tosefta and the processes of the development of the halakhic material and its presentation in the Tannaitic literature, which may be more complex than has previously been described by scholars.

As part of this study Cecilia will also examine the relations between the wording of the verses quoted in the Tosefta and their wording in the Masoretic text and in early scriptural translations, through paying attention to the connections between the versions and possible directions of influence. She will also examine gender aspects of the use of biblical verses and the way the exegeses of the verses are presented. On all these fronts I expect that the study will produce very interesting conclusions that will resonate throughout the scholarly world.

The collaboration and guidance Cecilia will receive at the Bar-Ilan University Talmud Department will assist her greatly and enrich her research abilities. 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 close sources, its internal structure, and the methods of its transmission. As part of my work in the study of the Tosefta I will be publishing, along with my partner Prof. Adiel Shermer, a critical version with an introduction of Tosefta Neziqin for tractates Sanhedrin–Horayot, and from my familiarity with the book I estimate that the study Cecilia proposes has the potential to lead to innovative and meaningful conclusions. A variety of questions I address in my studies are adjacent to the research questions that will arise in Cecilia’s proposed study, and I expect fertile collaboration. Some of the scholars at Bar-Ilan are engaged in topics that are close to Cecilia’s proposed study, including scholars of tannaitic literature, Midrashic literature, the wordings of biblical texts, and gender, so in my estimation Bar-Ilan will be an excellent place to support the proposed study and the continued development of Cecilia’s academic horizons.

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