

**SUGIA** | JEWISH WISDOM  
CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

**JEWISH EDUCATIONAL LEADERS  
ABOUT SUGIA**



***Greater is the learning which leads to action***

"גדול תלמוד המביא לידי מעשה"

**ELIE WIESEL**

NOBEL PEACE PRIZE LAUREATE

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**RABBI SHAY PIRON**

MINISTER OF EDUCATION

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**PROF. JEHUDA REINHARZ**

PRESIDENT OF THE MANDEL FOUNDATION AND FORMER PRESIDENT OF BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

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**AVRAHAM INFELD**

PRESIDENT EMERITUS OF HILLEL THE FOUNDATION FOR JEWISH CAMPUS LIFE

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**MK DR. RUTH CALDERON**

KNESSET MEMBER, FOUNDER AND PAST CEO OF ALMA COLLEGE

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**PROF. JON A. LEVISOHN**

DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR STUDIES IN JEWISH EDUCATION AT BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

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**DOV ELBAUM**

DIRECTOR OF BINA'S CENTER FOR JEWISH THOUGHT

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**ABI DAUBER STERNE**

VICE PRESIDENT FOR GLOBAL JEWISH EXPERIENCE, HILLEL INTERNATIONAL

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**ELI KANAI**

CHIEF EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY OFFICER AT AVI CHAI

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**DR. BARRY W. HOLTZ**

FORMER DEAN, WILLIAM DAVIDSON GRADUATE SCHOOL OF JEWISH EDUCATION –JTS

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**PROF. DAVID DERY**

PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC POLICY AT HEBREW UNIVERSITY. FORMER CHIEF SCIENTIST FOR THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR .

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**RABBI YITZ GREENBERG**

FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL JEWISH CENTER FOR LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP.

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**R' MICHAEL MELCHIOR**

FORMER HEAD OF THE ISRAELI KNESSET EDUCATION COMMITTEE. CHIEF RABBI OF NORWAY.

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**AVINOAM ROSENAK**

HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT OF JEWISH THOUGHT - HEBREW UNIVERSITY

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**ELI SILVER**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ,AVI CHAI, ISRAEL

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**PETER A. GEFFEN,**

FOUNDER AND CEO, KIVUNIM, FOUNDER, THE ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL SCHOOL, NYC

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## Elie Wiesel

*Nobel Peace Prize laureate*

I have seen Sugia: the internet platform and was very impressed.  
This project seems to me enlightening and fascinating.

## Rabbi Shay Piron

*Minister of Education*



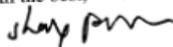
ירושלים, כ"ו אייר תשע"ד  
26/05/2014  
סימוכין: 15915204

To Whom It May Concern:

Sugia is pioneering the "next – thing" in the technological Jewish educational revolution we are seeking. We have begun piloting it in our education system as it has the potential of becoming a game changer in this area.

Its outstanding innovation is using the new media "Pro-sumer" engaging experience, to empower learners. I know personally the founder and of Sugia- Udi Lion and his ability to fully and successfully realize his spearheaded visionary ideas.

All the best,

  
Rabbi Shay Piron  
Minister of Education

## Prof. Jehuda Reinharz

*President of the Mandel Foundation and Former President of Brandeis University*

Sugia's goal is to create a digital platform fostering and facilitating Talmudic-like debate and discussion amongst the intellectual, spiritual and professional leaders of the Jewish people. It would be a virtual Beit Midrash. It is a great project and Udi Lion is the right person to make it happen.

Udi Lion is a leading Jewish educator and filmmaker in Israel and a graduate of the Mandel School for Educational Leadership. He has also studied for many years in Rabbi Kook's Yeshiva and later with Rabbi Steinsaltz and is a senior executive in Israel's TV Channel 2.

## **Avraham Infeld**

*President Emeritus of Hillel the Foundation for Jewish Campus Life*

Based on my experience at Hillel, I am confident that the creative and exciting Sugia project is an educational and cultural tool that comes closer than anything I have yet seen in making Jewish texts and mindset of relevance to today's Jews on Campus.

I hope the project will be given the attention I believe it really deserves

Sugia is being developed by my close and brilliant friend Udi Lion  
Udi is among the most creative minds in Jewish Education and media in the Jewish world ,  
with numerous success such as the highly acclaimed TV series Arab Labor [עבודה ערבית]  
and the film Ushpizin [אושפיזין] .

## **MK Dr. Ruth Calderon**

*Knesset member, Founder and past CEO of ALMA College*

It is a pleasure for me to connect you and my friend Udi Lion, a one of a kind educator and thinker. Udi is a maverick in Jewish culture and is developing Sugia: a project I think you'd love and can be a great fit for the JCC

## **Prof. Jon A. Levisohn**

*Director, Center for Studies in Jewish Education at Brandeis University*

Sugia has enormous potential to be a powerful connector of people and ideas for the Jewish world.

Udi Lion has channeled his passion and creativity into something that is both old and new, using classical sources alongside contemporary ones, a traditional form combined with cutting-edge media technologies.

What particularly impresses me is the way that Sugia is not about the technology. It's not about the latest flashy gimmicks. Instead, what drives the project is the desire to raise the level of Jewish conversation. I look forward to seeing it develop, and contributing however I can!

## Prof' Ruth Gavison

*Israel prize winner and head of*



I am writing in warm support of SUGIA and the person behind this exciting, path-breaking and innovative project: Udi Lion.

Sugia's vision is both deep and revolutionary. It identifies, correctly, that one of the most serious problems in Israeli society, especially Israeli Jewish society, is the character of the discussion of issues of identity and public affairs in the country. Some would say the issue is not the nature of the discussion, but the relative shallowness, almost non-existence of such a serious discussion. Most political, social and cultural issues are deeply politicized and legalized, and the discourse is thus conflictual, ideological and seeking quick fixes and resolutions determined by power balance rather than processes of interaction, ongoing negotiations, and compromises which are always necessary for a robust social and political life.

This is especially a problem for a state that defines itself as a Jewish state, seeking self-determination for Jews and their ability to develop – within political independence - their culture and traditions. Sugia seeks to redress both aspects of the challenge by developing a virtual platform that will enable a more sustain and informed public discussion of modern dilemmas, built on the age-old tradition of the development of oral law (*torah she-b-al-peh*).

Lion works on this in a persistent, devoted way. We have now been working together on using this emerging platform to 'translate' into this framework the cluster of issues raised by the regime of marriage and divorce in Israel. The starting point has been a position paper - **A Civil Framework for marriage and Divorce in Israel** (Metzilah 2013) and a series of panels held by Metzilah and the van Leer Institute in 2013-2014.

The vision is extremely ambitious. But this is how great ideas are started. When the work ripens, we may have an extremely powerful tool which may help deepen and broaden discussions of critical issues for Israel and the Jewish people, all within the framework of the Talmudic paradigm of learning, adapted to present-day possibilities.

I have faith in the idea of Sugia and in the vision of its founder. I am deeply appreciative of Lion's huge investment and creativity. I believe that this is a project well worth supporting.

## Dov Elbaum

*Director of BINA's Center for Jewish Thought*



As part of Binah's "We Declare" project", we are putting together the 'Israeli Talmud –the Independence tractate " - a Talmudic like text in which we combine Midrash and together with articles about the Israeli Declaration of Independence , intending to generate dialogue about the vision of Israeli society today

We were excited to learn about SUGIA and wish to use this special and unique tool for our project. SUGIA offers a unique approach and mechanism of stimulating discussions, and knowledge management that is specially adjusted for debates , particularly those based on texts.

Beyond the advantages of the software, we can testify that the developers have full and deep understanding of the complexity of transferring Talmudic discourse to internet medium, therefore, they also are ideal and great partners for this challenging work.

Dov Elbaum

Director of BINA's Center for Jewish Thought

Esti Kirmaier

Director of "We Declare"

## Abi Dauber Sterne

*Vice President for Global Jewish Experience, Hillel International*

I have seen a number of different platforms and technologies that attempt to engage the learner. However, Sugia seems to be the most advanced, creative, and interactive. I can see how Jewish educational professionals and students could benefit from this platform. Sugia enables the participants to create a modern Talmud, presenting contemporary voices in discussion with traditional wisdom. I believe that with the right facilitation and partnerships, Sugia could create new ways for Jews of all walks of life to study and create Torah.

## Eli Kanai

*Chief educational technology officer at AVI CHAI*



28/04/2014

### Re: The Sugia project

As the chief educational technology officer at AVI CHAI I strive to keep abreast of the developments in the use of technology in Jewish educational both in Israel and abroad. I view the intersection of the methods employed by the Jewish Talmud and Bet Midrash deliberations together with the tools provided by the Internet are most valuable as I prepare for the future of Jewish Education. This is the place I see Sugia, a new initiative which brings the internet and Jewish Talmud together in a unique and meaningful way.

Sugia is a startup lead by serious, veteran entrepreneurs. As such, there are risks of failure but also great potential. At AVI CHAI, we decided to grant Sugia matching pre-seed funding together with others as we follow its development.

We believe that this is a promising project because it creates a few advantages based on the Sugia platform: a unique way of engagement integrating Jewish universal and popular culture and creating an enriching experience; New Media and its relevance – putting contemporary issues and life dilemmas at the center; and community building and Jewish Peoplehood – all of these are enabled by the platform.

We are also impressed by its achievements to date in the recruitment of many leaders, experts and intellectuals willingness to contribute their views on the debated issues. We are also happy with the level and quality of the Hebrew platform developed, and the surprising fact that important Israeli organizations are willing to pay to experiment with it while it is still in the initial pilot stage.

Above all, as in many high risk investments the people behind it are crucial. I know personally the high level professionals involved, top level executives in media and technology innovations in Israel, and most importantly the founder and leader of the pilot Udi Lion. I have known Udi for many years as a visionary leader and trust that the team he has built will be able to further the work of Sugia.

# Dr. Barry W. Holtz

Former Dean, William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education –JTS



**JEWISH  
THEOLOGICAL  
SEMINARY OF  
AMERICA**

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April 10, 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

I am happy to write in support of the outstanding new educational program, Sugia, developed by Udi Lion. Recently I had the opportunity to read the background materials about Sugia and see an in-person demonstration of the program by Mr. Lion.

As a long-time Jewish educator in the American context I was extraordinarily impressed by this work. First, of the many new ideas connecting technology and education that I have seen or read about, it seems to me that Sugia truly stands out. It is remarkably thoughtful, sophisticated, and most importantly focused on content and not just on the “bells and whistles” of technology as a kind of “toy.” This is serious education—well designed and impressive.

Second, the program tries to address real world contemporary issues and apply the lens of Jewish sources (of a wide variety of sorts—secular and religious) to engaging with the questions, particularly the moral questions, that all of us face in today’s environment. Sugia makes the case that Jewish culture and Jewish ideas matter in thinking about these pressing issues.

Third, Sugia views the creation of a beit midrash kind of mentality in a deeply democratic way. Many voices through networks and networks of networks can engage together to create virtual conversations spanning the Jewish world—in Israel and in many different diasporas.

This is an extraordinary opportunity for educators and funders to take the best possible advantage of technology to create communities of learners, engaged in issues that communicate the idea that the resources of the Jewish tradition matter in our world today and that all learners can become part of the “Great conversation” of our civilization. I give it my highest endorsement.

Thank you.

Best wishes,

*Barry W. Holtz*

Dr. Barry W. Holtz

Theodore and Florence Baumritter Professor of Jewish Education  
Former Dean, William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education  
Jewish Theological Seminary

## **Prof. David Dery**

*Professor of political science and public policy at Hebrew University.  
Former chief scientist for the Ministry of Interior .*

I was thrilled to learn about SUGIA : the Beit Midrash Internet platform being developed . This unique integration of Talmudic methodology with cutting edge technology, offers an exceptional opportunity for discussions and deliberations on major issues of public policy and create an opportunity for a dialogue of experts and the general public.

I can vision my students experts in this "Beit Midrash" together with colleagues and other becoming partners in creating a " *daf*" about issues like central - local government ,etc., to be used for other interested in the same issues . I truly believe in the success of this important and interesting project.

## **Rabbi Yitz Greenberg**

*Former president of the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership.*

The important goal of Sugia is creating contemporary "Talmud", generating a worldwide set of conversations on contemporary questions and issues that would draw on Jewish wisdom and sources and on Jewish wise people enriched discussion.. These edited discussions that will be published over the internet would let the participants and followers click on sources, texts, enrichment materials as the deliberation goes on .

I have known Udi for quite a few years and am enormously impressed with him as a spiritual seeker, deeply ethical and creative both in Israeli film and TV. He is a social media leader with a strong, pluralist Jewish commitment.

I believe the project will get there as it is very promising and Udi is a highly a serious and talented person .

My good friend Alan Dershowitz was also so impressed that he joined as one of the projects scholars which can give an indication of the promise and quality of the project.

## **R' Michael Melchior**

*Former Head of the Israeli Knesset Education Committee. Chief Rabbi of Norway,*

Sugia has the capacity to become a major development in Jewish education. Therefore I have invested personally in the project.

I have followed Udi closely and worked with him for many years. He is a unique Jewish scholar and educator, a social activist, and an excellent and creative media professional, who initiated some of the most meaningful and successful films and programs on Israeli commercial TV.

**Avinoam Rosenak**

*Head of the Department of Jewish Thought - Hebrew University*

**האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים**



**THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM**

Department of Jewish Thought

Mount Scopus

24/4/2014

To Whom It May Concern:

Udi Lion is a close friend, a unique Jewish scholar and educator, a social activist, and the pioneers in Israel of bringing Jewish content to the media. He initiated some of the most meaningful and successful films and programs on Israeli commercial TV.

Udi Lion has been working on one of the most creating platform called Sugia, which aspires to create a modern Talmud, and I am extraordinarily impressed by this project.

Sugia tries to address real world contemporary issues and to give the Jewish sources a deep and important rule with a wide variety of sorts to engaging with the questions, particularly the moral questions, that all of us have in our life and with our environment.

All this is happening on a very impressive technological platform which is connected technology and education in a very high level, but not as a "game", but it focuses on content with a very deep way.

Sugia creates a new and fascinating beit midrash on the web – something that can be the right framework to our generation. It is a project with a Jewish and Democratic vision that succeeded to bring together many voices and to create with them a new kind of conversations on the basis of the Jewish wisdom in Israel and the diaspora.

This is a very unique opportunity to take the best possible advantage of technology to create communities of learners and Udi Lion is the perfect person to lead this outstanding project.

I hope that you will find the right way to help Udi to develop this important project.

All the best

Avinoam Rosenak

The Department of Jewish Thought  
The Hebrew University in Jerusalem

**Eli silver**

*Executive Director ,AVI CHAI, Israel*



13 Sivan 5774  
June 11, 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

As the CEO of the AVI CHAI Israel Foundation, I am pleased to write this note on behalf of the Sugia project, which we have been supporting since its inception in 2012. Sugia is an ambitious and promising startup led by experienced entrepreneurs. It aspires to use new media to enable Jews of diverse backgrounds and perspectives to engage in relevant, contemporary issues and life dilemmas, while drawing from Jewish and general texts and resources. Sugia promotes values that are essential to the vitality of the Jewish world – study, dialogue, debate, community building, and Jewish Peoplehood.

We have been impressed by Sugia's achievements during its startup phase – the recruitment of many leaders, experts, and intellectuals willing to contribute their views; the level and quality of the Hebrew platform developed; and the decision by important Israeli organizations to pay to experiment with the site while it is still in an initial pilot stage.

As with many high risk investments, the people behind the initiative are crucial to its success. Udi Lion is a creative and visionary entrepreneur, and he has succeeded in recruiting top-notch professionals to his staff, and outstanding executives in media and technology innovations in Israel to his Board. We believe the team he has built holds great promise. With additional support, we think Sugia can continue to take important steps toward realizing its ambitious goals.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any additional questions.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Eli Silver', with a long, sweeping underline.

Dr. Eli Silver  
Executive Director, AVI CHAI Israel



**Peter A. Geffen,**

*CEO, KIVUNIM, Founder, The Abraham Joshua Heschel School, NYC*

In a literary/religious tradition of two thousand years, it is a rare moment when a new approach presents the potential to create both new students and new understandings.

Enter "Sugia" and Israeli television creative genius Udi Lion! We now have before us a 21st century opportunity to engage the Talmudic texts through an internet-based, multi-disciplinary, and intellectually integrated approach that is truly an eye and door opener!

Sugia does not just offer access; it presents an entirely new way of engaging the very old. Jews of all perspectives will now have a way to probe more deeply into the philosophical and practical depths of Jewish thought. They will have access to texts and the ideas they contain in ways that were previously either unavailable or available only to the select few.

Judaism as we know it will change as a result, for the future will bring a more deeply informed and educated community of learners, seekers and doers."