

Basic Law: Torah Study



Basic Law: Torah Study is an Israeli constitutional law enacted on July 13, 2026, declaring: “Torah study is a foundational value in the heritage of the Jewish people and in the State of Israel.” The final law consists of that single sentence and contains no enforcement mechanism, funding provision, definition of Torah study, or explicit exemption from military service. Because Israel’s Basic Laws collectively form the country’s constitutional framework, however, the designation gives Torah study a higher legal status than would an ordinary declaratory statute. The Knesset approved the law by 63 votes to 52. It was sponsored by United Torah Judaism legislators Moshe Gafni and Yaakov Asher.

The legislation originated in agreements forming Benjamin Netanyahu’s government in December 2022, which promised to establish Torah study as a foundational value. It was revived amid renewed conflict over the conscription of Haredi yeshiva students. In 2024, the Supreme Court ruled that the government lacked legal authority to continue granting blanket exemptions and was required to apply the Security Service Law to eligible yeshiva students. Later proceedings addressed the government’s obligation to enforce conscription and reconsider public benefits for men who had not resolved their military status. Supporters of Basic Law: Torah Study sought to establish a constitutional value to be considered alongside equality, national security, and mandatory service.

The bill passed a preliminary reading on June 10, 2026, by a vote of 56 to 43. Earlier versions went considerably beyond the final text. One formulation provided that people who committed themselves to long-term Torah study would, for purposes of their rights and obligations, be treated as performing “meaningful service” for Israel and the Jewish people. That language was widely understood to place full-time yeshiva study on a legal footing comparable to military or national service. After objections from opposition parties, reservists, legal officials and some coalition legislators, it was removed. A subsequent version referred to creating a “just balance” between Torah study and other foundational values, but that language was also deleted before final passage.

The legislative process itself became controversial. Although proposals for new Basic Laws are generally considered by the Constitution, Law and Justice Committee, the Knesset transferred deliberations to the House Committee. Knesset legal adviser Sagit Afik warned that the transfer created a substantial procedural

difficulty because the proposal concerned constitutional principles, the character of the state and equality. The House Committee nevertheless prepared the bill, which passed its first reading on July 1 by 63 votes to 53 and its final readings on July 13 by 63 votes to 52. Prime Minister Netanyahu did not participate in the final vote.

Gafni described the law as historic recognition of the role Torah study played in preserving the Jewish people and said it would serve as a moral compass for the state. Supporters emphasized that the final text was declaratory and did not itself grant exemptions or benefits. Critics argued that its constitutional status could nevertheless support future claims for military-service exemptions, yeshiva funding, subsidies for draft evaders, or preferential treatment for institutions that emphasize religious study. Legal officials disagreed over its likely effect. Afik said that removing the operative clauses substantially reduced the constitutional concerns and that the law did not directly govern sanctions or resource allocation. Deputy Attorney General Avital Sompolinsky cautioned that, if the legislation was intended to give courts a new constitutional consideration, deleting those clauses did not necessarily eliminate its practical significance.

The Movement for Quality Government petitioned the High Court of Justice immediately after the law's passage. It argued that the Knesset had abused its constituent authority by using a Basic Law to advance a specific political and sectoral objective, circumvent conscription rulings and impair equality. The petition also alleged procedural defects arising from the committee transfer and accelerated legislative process. Alternatively, it asked the Court to declare that the law was purely symbolic and could not alter existing conscription or funding law. Justice Ofer Grosskopf declined to issue an interim injunction, noting that the law contained no concrete operative provisions, and ordered the state and other respondents to submit preliminary responses by September 15, 2026. The law therefore remained in force while the constitutional challenge proceeded.

Sources: Ariela Karmel, "Haredi Parties Seek to Enshrine Torah Study in Basic Law to Protect Draft Exemptions," [Times of Israel](#), (June 2, 2026).

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"Subject to Renewed Debate, House Committee Approves Basic Law Proposal: Torah Study for Final Readings," [Knesset](#), (July 12, 2026).

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Melanie Lidman, Natalie Melzer, "Israel's Parliament Approves Laws to Enshrine Exemption of Ultra-Orthodox Men from Military Service," [AP](#), (July 14, 2026).

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