



# THE MANY FACES OF ME

Exploring Identity in a Post-Modern World

A Pardes Winter Learning Intensive



January 5-9, 2020

For faculty bios, visit [www.pardes.org.il/faculty](http://www.pardes.org.il/faculty)

## Course Descriptions

### EARLY AM OPTIONS

Beginning on Monday, student-run options for morning prayer, meditation, etc, will be available. Details to come.

### SUNDAY AM KICKOFF

Sunday 8:45-10:15 am

#### **Introduction: Mapping Our Own Identity Through Torah**

*Meesh Hammer-Kossoy*

Two parts text study, one part introduction, and one part icebreaker--this class is having an identity crisis! We'll kick off the Intensive with an attempt to map ourselves through text onto some of the major questions of identity that we'll be exploring all week.

### MORNING MIFGASH / GATHERING, 8:45 AM DAILY

From Sunday to Thursday, we will convene daily in the Beit Midrash at 8:45 am.

On Sunday we will kick off the week with a longer introductory session (see above); on Mon-Thurs this will be a quick but important way to start the morning as a whole community before splitting up into Text Intensive classes. Please be on time.

**MORNING TEXT INTENSIVES** (pick one for all five mornings, Sunday-Thursday)  
Sun 10:30 am -1:00 pm; M / T / W / Th 9:00 -11:30 am

### **Introductory Rabbinic/Humash: Language, Dress, Names and Identity**

*This co-taught course enables those brand-new to text study to experience both Biblical and Rabbinic texts over the course of the week.*

*“And there they became a nation” – this teaches that the Israelites were distinct there, in that their clothing, food, and language was different from the Egyptians’. (Minor Pesikta, Devarim (Ki Tavo) 41a)*

- **Sunday/Tuesday/Thursday: Language and Identity (Intro Rabbinics)**

*Leah Rosenthal*

In these three sessions we will study and examine sections of the Mishna and Talmud which discuss questions of language and ritual. Through careful textual study we will discover and participate in an ancient conversation about identity, community and individuality that appears to resonate with contemporary applications and dilemmas. This is an opportunity to acquaint oneself with the central, canonical texts of the Oral Tradition, while reflecting on their relevance to our Jewish lives today.

- **Monday/Wednesday: Made to Measure**

*Michael Hattin*

The clothing that we wear says much about our cultural identity, our values and our beliefs. As such, clothing can be unifying - connecting us to those who dress like us, or divisive - separating us from others who don't. Jewish tradition preserves a lively discussion about the place of clothing in articulating who we are and what we stand for, both as individuals as well as a people. Our studies will focus on a number of celebrated Biblical contexts and their later elaboration in Rabbinic and Halakhic literature.

### **Beginners Humash: They Did What? A Look at Four Episodes in the Hebrew Bible That Challenge Our Sensibilities and Clarify our Identities**

*Howard Markose*

Our Hebrew Bible (Tanakh) tells many stories, some of which are troubling because of their content, others of which are disconcerting because of the manner in which the stories' characters handle the dilemmas which they face, given their identities. In this course, we will examine four disparate and yet curiously resonant episodes found in the Tanakh which seem to call on the reader to evaluate the actions and reactions of the players. Through this analysis, the students will be given the opportunity to reflect on how their own responses to the characters and their actions might have an effect on their own Jewish (and human) identity.

*NOTE: In this class, we will be confronting stories that deal with sexual violence and*

*objectification of women. Together, we will endeavor to wrestle with the feelings and issues that may arise.*

### **Beginner Rabbinics: Creating a Stable Universe: Halakhic Identity in a World of Uncertainty and Change**

*Daniel Reifman (S/M/Tu/Th)*

*Wednesday's class will be taught by Meir Schweiger and focusing on Halakhic Identity, Jewish Status and Conversion.*

When we think of the many aspects of modern society that shape our sense of self, law does not immediately come to mind. Yet our legal status -- as citizens, property or business owners, legal spouses and guardians, etc... -- are among the most durable and consequential elements of our identity, and impact the way we think of ourselves more than we care to admit.

Halakhah, Jewish law, has its own set of status markers, which define our identity in ways both large and small. We will study several halakhic discussions regarding personal status, examining how halakhic identity provides a sense of stability and certitude even as it responds to shifting historical and individual circumstances.

### **Intermediate/Advanced Humash: Insiders and Outsiders: A rigorous and reflective reading of the Book of Ruth**

*Tovah Leah Nachmani*

Impending drought and hunger in the Land of Israel pushes Naomi and Boaz to take their sons and leave their community for greener pastures in Moab. But soon after their resettling, Naomi loses her husband, and both sons die after marrying Moabite women. A vulnerable and bereaved widow, and mother - Naomi sends her daughters in law to return to their parental homes for her heart yearns to reunite with her community.

But Ruth clings to the nation-identity and to the God of Naomi. Naomi returns to her home and Land, together with Ruth, arousing the resentment of her community and provoking the alienation of family and friends who had once been her kindred spirits.

A rigorous reading of the Megilla will expose the dilemmas and consequences of insiders and outsiders - daring women and men in the Book of Ruth, while inviting us to discuss the tensions between our authentic individuality and the mores, traditions and values of community we seek to embrace.

### **Advanced Talmud: Defining In but Building Out: Darchei Shalom**

*Rahel Berkovits*

What should be my relationship with people who are different from me? Who should be the people who make up my community? In particular how should one interact with those who hold different religious beliefs and practices? In this class we will study the

Mishnah and Gemara at the end of the fifth chapter of Tractate Gittin, which focuses on the rabbinic enactments done in the interests of peace. We will examine and analyze the sugya's view on relationships between the Haveirim, the elite group of rabbis, and the Amei Haaretz, the lay people who do not keep Jewish law as strictly, as well as interactions between Jews and non-Jews. Special attention will be paid to the meta-themes and literary structure of the sugya.

### **Kollel Talmud: Who is a Jew: How do I identify and where will I be accepted?**

*Meir Schweiger (Sun / Thurs morning only)*

*The Kollel class is open to current Kollel students and others with pre-approval to join.*

Jewish status issues are among the most painful in the Jewish world today because they touch on the core of one's identity. As the numbers of individuals who are Jewish in the eyes of some, but not all, are growing at a rapid pace, the question of "who is a Jew" has become increasingly divisive. In our sessions, we will study a range of rabbinic sources - from Talmud to Codes to modern responsa (Orthodox and non-Orthodox), examining not only the legal, practical issues, but also the conceptual/ philosophical questions that both underlie and result from them.

*NOTE: Elisha Ancselovits will be teaching the Kollel on Tues:*

*Niddah: Self-Identity and the Mirror of the Other*

## **SUNDAY AFTERNOON ELECTIVES, 2:30-5:00 PM**

### **Rav Kook: The Particular and the Universal**

*Zvi Hirschfield*

The tension between the particular and the universal lies at the heart of Torah and many of today's cultural challenges. R' A.Y. HaCohen Kook was one of the great thinkers and holy souls of the Jewish people in the early 20th century. He saw himself at the crossroads of history - the world was between the wars and the Jewish people between exile and redemption. His writings offer a relationship between the particular and universal which combines ancient and modern wisdom and which is more relevant every day.

### **Finding Ourselves Through Jewish Meditation: The Theory and Practice of Self-Discovery through Torah**

*Daniel Silverstein*

Meditation, in all its myriad forms, can be a powerful tool for self-discovery. In this session, we will delve deep into texts relating to Jewish meditative practices, which describe various approaches and techniques for deepening our inner search. We will then try some of these practices together, and process the experience.

## **Sexual identity and Intersectionality**

*Nechama Goldman-Barash*

Traditional Judaism is binary. Everything breaks down to gender in terms of mitzvot, synagogue and community. Sexuality is purely a vehicle for marital heterosexuality between two fully Jewish members of the community. Where does that leave us? An increasing number of Jews intermarry and a large majority engage in non-marital sex. LGBTQ Jews are looking to Jewish ritual and text to find sanctity in their sexual relationships despite the complex Biblical texts that seem to prohibit. Can such a gendered religious tradition cross over? We will engage in critical text study to try and mine from the sources relevant and deeper meanings to provide value to the sexual identity and sexual behavior that engage Jews today.

## **SUNDAY NIGHT ENRICHMENT**

### **5:15-7:00 pm: Hasidut - Soul Roots**

*Levi Cooper*

Following hallowed kabbalistic tradition, hasidic masters meditated on the notion of an individual's soul root. We will explore how hasidic tradition indicates that a person's soul root is linked to that person's individual identity and mission in this temporal world

### **7:00-10:00 pm: "I Was Not Born a Mistake" - Film Screening and Soup Social**

*\*Film tickets will be discounted for Pardes and WLI students\**

- 7:00-7:45 pm: Gathering and soup social
- 7:45-9:30 pm: Screening and Q&A with Yiscah Smith
- 9:30-10:00 Discussions

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## **MON / WED MIDDAY EXPLORATIONS, 11:45 AM - 1:00 PM**

Pick **one** mini-course for both days:

### **Am I my Job?**

*Zvi Hirschfield*

Together we will explore Jewish sources that talk about the tensions between professional responsibilities and aspirations, and the other important dimensions of our lives. We will also think about how to prioritize job opportunities with other needs such as family, geography, community and other life demands.

## **The Jewish Calendar - Particularity vs Universality**

*Michael Hattin*

The Jewish calendar is based upon integrating a complex arrangement of lunar and solar motion. We will explore some of its intricacies as we probe a fundamental question of Jewish identity: how can we resolve the tension between our distinctiveness as a people on the one hand and our aspirations for universal fellowship on the other?

## **What it Takes to be a Servant of G-d - Majesty and Humility**

*Meir Schweiger*

In our sessions, we will examine three figures who are described in the text as servants of G-d - Abraham, Moses and David. We will also look at the "servant of Abraham" who mirrors his master, the servant of G-d. We will see how each of them integrates qualities of majesty and humility to actualize the "title" and identity that is the mandate for all of humanity.

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## **The Search for Authenticity--Monday only**

*Yiscah Smith*

In the Jewish tradition authentic living is a spiritual practice that we cultivate and is actually essential to the spiritual Jewish way of living. However, what do we mean by authenticity? What are we searching for? What parts of ourselves fall within the practice of cultivating authentic living? We shall explore two verses in Deuteronomy 29:9-10 that provide an answer and teach to the textured, diverse and complex expression of authentic living. "You are standing today, all of you before HaShem, your God: your heads, your tribes, your elders and your officers, all the men of Israel; your small children, your women, and your stranger who is in the midst of your camp, from the hewer of your wood to the drawer of your water."

## **The Death & Rebirth of Rav: A Tale of Rabbinic Hazing--Wednesday only**

*Gila Fine*

What caused the political feud between the rabbis of Israel and Babylon? How dangerous was bowel disease in the ancient world? And why does Shmuel cruelly humiliate the man who would become his lifelong hevruta, the great Amora Rav? Exploring the grotesque tale of Rav's immigration to Babylon, through the Talmud and Midrash, Geonim and Rishonim, Mikhail Bakhtin and Daniel Boyarin, Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Avraham Steinberg.

## **MON / WED CONTEMPORARY APPLICATIONS, 2:30-5:00 PM**

Pick **one** mini-course for both days:

### **From the Daughters of Egypt to the Daughters of Tzelaphechad: Women Leading from Personal to National Identity**

*Judy Klitsner*

- **Mon, Part I: The Midwives of Egypt and the Road to Redemption: Women Discovering Self and the Divine**

We will compare the biblical story of building the world's largest structure—the tower of Babel—with the tale of subjugation and heroism in Egypt, noting the centrality of personal identity in both stories. In the Exodus story, our focus will be on outstanding female characters (the midwives, as well as several heroic "daughters"), whose strong sense of identity helps to repair the fractured connection with the divine and helps catalyze the redemption process.

- **Wed, Part II: From the Daughters of Egypt to the Daughters of Tzelaphechad: Women Leading from Personal to National Identity**

In a sequel to the story of the courageous "daughters" of Egypt, the daughters of Tzelaphechad stand up to all leadership symbols and figures, bringing about unexpected changes in law and in attitudes toward outsiders. In a close examination of their story—which we will contrast with the story of the spies sent to scout out the land-- we will note themes of personal identity, gender identity and the transition from personal identity to communal and national identity.

### **Makhloket Matters: Being Me Without Negating You**

*Zvi Hirschfield and Sefi Kraut*

Together we will examine how constructive conflict can be a critical tool in building a strong personal identity. Using classical Jewish texts, social psychology, and contemporary conflicts, we will explore how constructive disagreement, as opposed to pushing people apart, can be a way to form productive and meaningful relationships.

### **Unity and Uniformity: National Jewish Identity and the case of the Ethiopian Community**

*Meesh Hammer-Kossoy*

- **Mon, Part I:** The Ethiopian Jewish community has lived in isolation from the rest of the Jewish world for 2700 years or more, so it is no great surprise that significant differences in practice have emerged. Over the last 800 years, the Sefardi and Ashkenazi Jews have struggled to define "what makes a Jew?" in order to answer the question "Is the Ethiopian community Jewish?"

- **Wed, Part II:** A new chapter in the drama unfolds with the ingathering of the exiles prompted by the founding of the State of Israel. The identities of the halakhic authorities themselves influences the course of history and results in bringing the Ethiopian Jews to join the nation. It will take still another generation for the Ethiopians themselves to assert their own voice and identity in Israeli society. How much uniformity is needed for us to be united as a people?

## MONDAY NIGHT ENRICHMENT

### **5:15 - 7:15 pm: Talmud Skills: Intermediate and Advanced Religious Opponents and Human Partners - Part I**

(Part II meets on Wed night)

*Zvi Hirschfield*

We will learn the opening Mishna and a sugya from Tractate Avoda Zara that deals with the challenge of the multiple identities that non-Jews may carry and how Jews struggle in response. We will focus on skill development in analyzing a Talmudic discussion with discussing the inherent tension raised by particularism and universalism.

**7:00-7:30 pm: Night Seder dinner** - 10 nis in advance; sign up by 5 pm Sunday

### **7:30-9:30 pm: Night Seder**

Jump in to the Bet Midrash and do your own independent learning, be set up with a *havruta* (learning partner), or join a *habura* (little study group).

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## TUESDAY MIDDAY PLENARY SESSION, 11:45 AM -1:00 PM

### ***Tokho k'Boro* - Outside and Inside: Understanding and Representing Ourselves Creative Arts Workshop with Kol HaOt (kolhaot.com)**

*Elyssa Moss Rabinowitz*

What is the relationship between my inner self and the self I present to the outside world? Do they align completely? Are they in dissonance with each other? In a world where we are constantly presenting ourselves to others- in person and online- how do we curate the various versions of our selves? Does ancient Jewish wisdom have insight on this issue?

Through text study and a personal hands-on art workshop, we will explore the relationships between our inner and outer selves. No previous artistic experience necessary!



## TUESDAY AFTERNOON 10 B'TEVET ELECTIVES, 2:30-4:00 PM

**NOTE:** 10 Tevet is traditionally observed as a fast day commemorating the siege on Jerusalem in 586 BCE. In modern times, it has also been declared the Yom HaKaddish HaKlali--the day of saying Kaddish for all those murdered in the Holocaust whose day of death is unknown. Afternoon classes will pick up on these themes.

### **Reclaiming our imperfect selves: from vulnerability to strength**

*Miriam Heller Stern*

Identities are often summarized by labels that at best only hint at who we really are at our core, and at worst obscure our most nuanced selves. But what about the parts of us that are fragile, fractious, in process, imperfect? The parts that shape who we are, yet we have been conditioned not to name or claim them? Together we will explore a collection of texts from Tanakh, Midrash, and Piyut, as well as art and music, that invite us to reclaim our imperfections and brokenness as valuable in the eyes of G-d. We will also enact the metaphors of the texts through an experiential project, for a multi-dimensional reflective learning experience that engages head, hands, and heart.

*Guest teacher Miriam Heller Stern, PhD, is Associate Professor (blended track) and National Director of the School of Education at Hebrew Union College, based on the Skirball campus in LA. She is passionate about empowering Jewish educational leaders and teachers to engage in their work intentionally, skillfully and creatively.*

### **The Stories We Tell About Ourselves: Jewish History and Jewish Memory**

*David I. Bernstein*

Every person and every nation has its own narrative(s) that make up the core of one's identity/ identities. Using a series of ancient and modern sources, this session will focus on how our tradition relates to our history and our memory. How does one create a firm identity? How does one avoid getting stuck in the past?

### **Moving Beyond PTSD**

*Nechama Goldman Barash*

Elizabeth Kubler Ross talked about the five stages of grief that are part of the framework that helps us deal with death and loss. In the Bible, when the two sons of Aaron die suddenly and tragically before the nation on the day the Tabernacle is dedicated, joy immediately turns to sorrow. We will look at the responses of Aaron, Moses and God to the personal and national aspects of mourning. We will then look at a series of rabbinic interpretations known as midrash that seek to understand the aftermath of trauma and grief and offer a number of parallel readings to go deeper into the consciousness and experience of pain and grief and yet emerge with some sort of closure.

## **Excavating the Temple Ideal**

*Michael Hattin*

On the 10th of Tevet, the Babylonians besieged the walls of Jerusalem. Almost three years later, they captured the city and razed the Temple to the ground. Remarkably, twenty-six centuries after its destruction, the memory of this mythical Temple lives on, perhaps more strongly than ever. We will explore some of the basic architectural features of the Temple before turning to a consideration of its symbolic meaning. Along the way, we may discover that the Temple as an idea articulates some of our most profound yearnings as a people.

### **TUESDAY AFTERNOON PEER-LED CLASSES, 4:15-5:00 PM**

Learn from your peers on a variety of topics connected with Identity. Details to come.

***Classes will be followed by optional evening prayers (Ma'ariv) in the Beit Midrash. \*Fast ends 5:13 - light snacks will be provided for those breaking their fasts.\****

### **TUESDAY NIGHT ENRICHMENT, 6:00-7:30 PM**

#### **Idolatry v. Belief: Our Unshakeable Inner Stories v. the Worship of an External Form**

*Elisha Ancselovits*

Must we seek halakhot/cultural norms that are fixed goal-free idols which provide us with identities? How can cultural norms (including Halakha) be wise practices and expand our identities?

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### **WEDNESDAY**

*9:00 am -7:15 pm Classes mirror the Monday schedule to enable deeper learning.*

Exception: 2:30-3:30 Peer-led classes. Details to be announced.

### **WEDNESDAY NIGHT ENRICHMENT**

#### **7:15 PM: A Student Celebration of Identity: Open Mic Night**

Students and faculty are invited to celebrate this week of identity exploration with an open mic night! Tell a story about a time your identity was formed or challenged; sing a song that spoke to you in a particular moment in your life; recite a poem (original or not) that reinforced your experience of self. All forms of self and group expression are welcome! Snacks and beverages will be served!

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## **THURSDAY MIDDAY AND AFTERNOON**

**11:30 am-1:00 pm: Closing Session**  
**Navigating our Personal Identity: Faculty Panel**

**1:30 pm-2:45 pm: Celebratory Closing Lunch**

**2:30-6:00 pm: Community Engagement Projects:**

- 2:30-3:30 Neighborhood Clean-Up. We'll head to a nearby lot and pick up trash as a community. Meet in the cafeteria.
- 3:30-5:00 [Pantry Packers](#). We'll walk to a local packaging factory and pack beans and rice for those in need. Meet in the cafeteria.
- 5:00-6:00 Singing in the Nursing Home.

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**WE HOPE YOU HAD A THOUGHT-PROVOKING, WONDERFUL WEEK!**