

# HAVRUTA

THE PARDES INSTITUTE OF JEWISH STUDIES | DECEMBER 2021 | TEVET 5782



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# A LETTER FROM

## *The President*



Dear Friends,

When I think about Pardes's ultimate vision — a description of Jewish life if our work were wildly successful — it is this: The "Beit Midrashification" of Jewish life. This phrase captures the essence of what Pardes aspires to achieve.

Beit Midrashification sees Jewish text study as fundamental for connecting to our traditions and to other Jews. Learning unites us, providing the common language needed to build community despite differences. Our texts, when explored within the Beit Midrash, can cultivate openness to differing perspectives.

For 49 years, Pardes has been an incubator of Beit Midrashification, promoting leadership grounded in texts. We've inspired thousands to build a thicker, more knowledgeable community by emphasizing the continued relevance of Jewish sources.

In May 2021, the Pew Research Center released the report *What Does It Mean to be Jewish in America?* Since a distinctive component of Pardes's work is bringing together Jews of different denominations, perspectives, and practices, we were particularly interested in the report's findings. How do American Jews relate to Jews who see the world and Judaism differently?

The data suggests significant challenges for achieving communal cohesion. About half of Orthodox Jews say they have "not much" or "nothing at all" in common with Reform Jews. Most Reform Jews reciprocate the sentiment. Only 9% of Orthodox Jews feel they have "a lot in common" with Reform Jews and vice versa. The implications of an increasingly bifurcated Jewish community are worrisome.

The Pardes experience — the promotion of Beit Midrashification — is an urgently needed intervention. Whether in our year, summer or short-term programs in Jerusalem, or through our growing presence in North America, Pardes is educating Jews to see the world and Jewish life differently: Jews who see Torah as enhanced when understood from many perspectives and the different ways it is lived.

In the following pages, you will learn more about our work: about online learning opportunities, the growth of Pardes has a new mailing address in North America. Matters Fellowship, the construction of Beit Karen, Torah and art, and so much more.

I hope you find our work compelling. The results of your investments are clear: thousands of Pardes alumni who feel a deep sense of belonging and commitment to the global Jewish community, its past, and its future.

Sincerely,



Rabbi Leon A. Morris  
*President*

### Important Update:

Pardes has a new mailing address in North America. Make sure to update your records.

Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies  
228 Park Ave S Suite 35858  
New York, New York 10003-1502



# ONLINE PARDES PROGRAMMING

September 2020 to May 2021

In the spring of 2020, with Covid-19 rapidly spreading across the world, Pardes committed to **Uninterrupted Torah**. Not only did our Jerusalem-based programs continue virtually, Pardes, through its new arm, Pardes North America, also quickly pivoted to offer more public options for online learning than ever before.

6,342



ONLINE LEARNING PARTICIPANTS

203



NEW PODCASTS

18,988

ONLINE  
LEARNING  
HOURS

282,473

PODCAST LISTENS



8

VIRTUAL  
TOURS OF  
ISRAEL

130

INDIVIDUAL  
CLASSES



118,000

VISITORS TO ELMAD,  
PARDES'S ONLINE LIBRARY



[elmad.pardes.org](http://elmad.pardes.org)



# שַׁבָּת וַיִּנְפֹּשׁ

# SHABBAT IN THE MODERN



# World



Faculty members **Dr. David I. Bernstein** and **Rabbanit Nechama Goldman Barash** discuss Shabbat, the theme of the 2022 Pardes Learning Seminars.

**NGB:** As I look over a list of words and memories that come up when I engage in a stream of consciousness about Shabbat, I am struck by the contrast between the *experiential* — food, smells, clothing, the feel of the air in Jerusalem when Shabbat begins, memories of Shabbat songs sung around my grandfather's table — with the *technical* and *restrictive* — Shabbat clocks, pre-ripped toilet paper, pre-cooked food warmed on a hot plate, no mobile or electronic devices actively in use. What contributes most to the essence of Shabbat? The observance of the positive or negative mitzvot?

**DIB:** My wife and I did not grow up in observant homes. In many ways, Shabbat was the engine that drove us to become religiously observant: the other-worldly, community, the pause and reflection, the ideas discussed around a Shabbat table, the singing — when do most moderns sing together around a table, if not on Shabbat?

And in an age of workaholicism, as the lines between work and home are more and more blurred, Shabbat is harder to observe. But precisely in our era, Shabbat is more necessary than ever — especially now with our addiction to screens.

**NGB:** Many within Orthodoxy will say that we need the immutable, unyielding structure with its hundreds of minute laws derived from the 39 *melakhot* (forms of work) taken from the building of the Tabernacle in ancient Israel. Is this really what God intended when commanding us to refrain from acts of labor? Is this what creates the atmosphere that infuses holiness

into the Shabbat candles, chicken soup, challah and prayer services?

**DIB:** I feel the need for a religious mandate to keep Shabbat; otherwise, I think I would revert to recording important thoughts that I'm likely to forget by *motzei Shabbat* (Saturday night after havdalah). I don't know that I'd do all the cooking in advance if left to my own (and my wife's) devices. Put it this way: I might have trouble resisting an extra piece of delicious cake, but it is no problem for me to be hungry and walk through a non-kosher food court without eating. The religious rules make a difference to me.

**NGB:** There is a text that I love that, to me, reflects the necessary space for growth in our relationship with God, which, to me, is also a microcosm of our relationship with our friends, family and community:

Bereishit Rabbah 11:8

Why did God bless Shabbat? Rabbi Berekiah says: "Because it has no partner. The first day of the week has the second, the third has the fourth, the fifth has the sixth, but Shabbat has no partner."

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai taught: "Shabbat pleaded with the Holy One, Blessed be God, saying: 'Everyone else has a partner, but I have nothing!'" God answered saying: "The community of Israel will be your partner."

God continued: "And when they stood before Sinai, God said to the Israelites: "Remember what I said to Shabbat, that the community of Israel is your partner,

[in the words of scripture] “Remember Shabbat and keep it holy.” (Exodus 20:8)

To my mind, this reinforces a strong theological idea that resonates with me: There is no partnership without both partners committing. God gives Shabbat to the community of Israel but, without the commitment to turn that partnership into something that is quantifiably expressed in some meaningful way, it will not really exist. I find that there are rabbinic texts that express the same sentiment about God’s presence in the world: If we do not create a relationship with God, ideally through Torah and mitzvot, but even minimally through acknowledgment of God’s existence, there will be no conscious awareness of the Divine presence in the world.

In any meaningful relationship — most obviously with spouses and children — if there is no reciprocity, there is no real relationship. Shabbat and God will exist in the same way a parent is always a parent to their children. However, without a space in which there is deliberate expression of that commitment, there is no growth or depth to the relationship.

**DIB:** While I agree wholeheartedly with you, Nechama, I think there is another aspect here. Ahad haAm wrote: “more than the Jews have kept the Shabbat, the Shabbat has kept the Jews.” I think this is true on an individual level. More than many other mitzvot, Shabbat keeps Jews Jewish. It is often (correctly or not) seen as the measuring stick of religious observance. “Are they Shomer Shabbat?” Perhaps only a few other mitzvot are used to characterize a person’s general level of observance, for better or for worse.

But it is also true on a national level: Shabbat keeps the Jewish people together, both vertically (continuity with previous and future generations) and horizontally (connection to other Jews living in our world).

**NBG:** Can we promote, in the manner of Rabbi Medan and Ruth Gavison, a Jewish Shabbat that reflects the tremendous concepts latent in the idea of a day of rest for those who are not halakhically observant, so that it is not just a day for shopping and the beach? In Israel, as in America, there are many popular Friday night services that bring Jewish people together in song and celebration but there are also too many people who keep little to nothing. Can we champion a Shabbat that is about family, culture and community — reflective of rest and rejuvenation — without halakhic restrictions but perhaps, given the relentless pace of modern technology, perhaps serving as a break from social media and digital communication?

**DIB:** As most Jews will not revert to a halakhic observance of Shabbat, this would be a wonderful compromise in Israel, and could have implications beyond our society. The “First Station” near me in Jerusalem provides an example of non-observant Jews coming together as family and friends on Shabbat. They sit at tables in restaurants and bars, listening to music and talking; they bring their small children to a small choo-choo train that drives them around the area. It is not the way I observe Shabbat but I am happy to see it in my neighborhood, and it clearly draws Israelis from outside the city.

**NBG:** We talk about a day of rest and renewal but, for many people, Shabbat is the most stressful day of the week with expectations for special food, hosting guests and creating a meaningful atmosphere.

**DIB:** That is so true. One of the pleasures of Shabbat is hosting, but it involves a lot of work. There are Shabbatot when my wife and I emerge exhausted — and that clearly demands greater balance.

**NBG:** I also worry about those who are alone for these 25 hours without the usual social framework and technologies that connect us. Covid has brought into sharp relief the acute contrast between the most vulnerable in society — old people, the disabled, single parents — who become completely untethered when Shabbat begins. Shabbat spent alone week after week is potentially fraught with a sense of alienation, loneliness, depression and despair. Are we paying enough attention to those we don’t invite to sit at our table and at times perhaps, prefer not to see? If God speaks of rest for the slaves and animals so that Shabbat becomes a framework for one and all to rejuvenate equally, where is our modern responsibility to ensure emotional rejuvenation for those who are on the periphery?

**DIB:** No doubt Shabbat is made for a family-oriented society. It can work well with friends as well. But being alone would make it so hard. I felt it recently when my wife and I returned from a trip abroad and had a week of quarantine at home. The most difficult day was Shabbat, and not only because of the absence of screens. It was mostly because of the absence of friends and family. This only highlights how important it is for us to include those who are alone in our Shabbat meals. 🍷

*To learn more about the 5-day Summer Pardes Learning Seminar (July 3–7, 2022) visit [www.pardes.org.il/seminar](http://www.pardes.org.il/seminar).*



# IS VIRTUAL LEARNING THE NEW *Reality?*

By Jamie Bornstein

It's now casually referred to as "the pivot," the sudden transition institutions made from in-person to online classes due to Covid. However, what were initially considered stopgap measures are now increasingly regarded as here to stay, a virtual *fait accompli* that, while unlikely to replace in-person learning, will surely be a growing component of modern education.

Distance learning is not new. Historians date it back to at least the 1700s, when correspondence education became increasingly popular, allowing educators and students to exchange assignments by mail. And, of course, local rabbis were seeking guidance and teachings from prominent authorities in far-off lands using written correspondence for centuries before that.

Fast forward to the 1990s when the internet and satellite technology revolutionized distance learning. It was quickly adopted by many institutions and evolved into what is referred to today as online learning. BAs, MAs, and even PhDs can now be pursued largely, if not entirely, online.

Pardes hasn't exactly been on the sidelines. Since Covid began, and even well before, Pardes has been offering weekly one-hour online classes, online *yamei iyun* (days of learning), and online mini-series. While popular, these classes are typically large, with limited student-teacher interaction and minimal havruta learning. In short, they were never designed to offer the type of intensive and long-term text learning experiences that Pardes offers in-person.

Can online learning provide authentic and intensive long-term Pardes learning experiences, when havruta-based learning in the Beit Midrash is as much a centerpiece of Pardes's educational experience as the texts themselves? Even if Pardes can offer similar experiences online, is Pardes operationally prepared to offer them while also maintaining its core short and long-term in-person programs? Finally, will the popularity of Pardes's existing online opportunities be predictive of success for intensive and long-term online programs? Pardes has been grappling with such questions since Covid became an ongoing fact of life.

Enter Rahel Berkovits, a veteran and highly sought-after member of Pardes's faculty.

During the 2020 Online Pardes Summer Program, Rahel offered two three-week Talmud classes, which attracted a group of enthusiastic and committed students. As the Summer Program came to a close, the group asked her to continue teaching. Rahel agreed to offer ongoing classes on Sunday afternoons East Coast Time, but with one caveat.



“It was important for the classes to be two hours,” Rahel shared. “I needed that length of time to have a proper havruta period in breakout rooms and then time for group discussion.”

Her request was approved, making it an official 2020 fall-semester online class. From there, Rahel notes, the “class then kept renewing itself and now we’ve been learning the entire year together.”

When asked about the challenges of teaching online, Rahel jumped first to the importance of knowing her students.

“One of the hardest challenges was building community and getting to know my students,” she said. “I sent out a survey asking about their lives, their Jewish text-study background, their Hebrew levels, and if they were more interested in discussing big ideas or skill-building. Then, I matched up havrutot, introduced them to each other, and encouraged them to schedule a ‘meeting.’ If a havruta pair worked well together, I encouraged them to remain together. Some are still going strong and have evolved into beautiful friendships.”

Some challenges were logistical. Not having a traditional whiteboard, a tool Rahel describes as critical for charting out a text’s structure, was hard at first. Still, teaching online came with advantages as well. “I can easily share my screen and reference other texts. When the Talmud quotes a verse, I can pull it up in its original location and context more easily than in a classroom. I can quickly pull up a picture of what an ancient Roman symposium looked like while discussing the custom of leaning during the Passover seder.”

And student reviews are strong. “If anyone thinks Mishna is not as brilliant or clever as any of the world’s greatest and most revered writings, they haven’t experienced Rahel’s magic,” said Lynn Olinger, a Texas-based immigration attorney whose 35-year career includes years as a New York City criminal prosecutor. “Her methodology will be familiar to those who’ve studied literature or poetry: discerning themes and viewpoints through the Mishna’s structure and language. She explores not just the words’ meanings, but sometimes their sounds and consonance. Rahel instructs with charm and vivacity.”

Can intensive online Jewish learning work? “We soon learned that one can create a learning community even when we are not all in the same physical space,” Rahel insisted. “And I believe text study is still transformative and religiously meaningful even when done virtually. The students’ encounter with the text that they still have physically before them is as real as if they were in the Pardes Beit Midrash. I hope that it will continue to reach people who otherwise would not have access to this level of Torah learning.”

“We knew that online learning in one form or another was here to stay,” remarked Pardes’s President, Rabbi Leon Morris. “Watching Rahel’s class evolve and grow for over a year and hearing the incredible feedback from her students, helped us to realize that there is a desire for online classes, even for classes that reflect the intensity and high commitment of our in-person classes. Online learning is certainly a growing component of our offerings, both here in Israel and in North America. The world is our Beit Midrash!” 🍎





# MORALEH:

**The Largely Unknown  
Story of the**

*Extraordinary Man*

**Who Helped Establish Pardes**

By Rabbi Michael Swirsky, Founder of Pardes

**O**n March 7th of this year, Israel lost a man of extraordinary character, intellect, and accomplishment, Mordechai Bar-On ז"ר, known to everyone simply as "Moraleh." Among his myriad achievements, his quiet role in facilitating the creation of the Pardes Institute, though little known or acknowledged, was one that he himself considered particularly significant.

An historian, writer, educator, and political and social activist, Moraleh began his career as a military man. He was wounded as a twenty-year-old officer in the War of Independence, then served as head of the IDF History Department, adjutant to Moshe Dayan during the Sinai Campaign, and finally, for five years, Chief Education Officer, with the rank of colonel. In the latter capacity he expanded the IDF's already extensive program promoting basic literacy, general academic and Jewish knowledge, cultural enrichment, and moral awareness among the troops. (The IDF is a people's army and, beyond defense, has always played a major role in the social development of the country.)

During his years of military service, Moraleh earned degrees from the Hebrew University and the Columbia University School of Foreign and Public Affairs. After leaving the army, he pursued a distinguished academic career as an historian, completing a doctorate and writing and editing dozens of books and articles, mostly dealing with the military history of Israel's early decades.

But his involvement in this subject always went well beyond the academic. Two weeks after the Six-Day War, when Yitzhak Rabin (pictured to the right) delivered his famous speech on Mt. Scopus extolling the victory but

warning of the dangers of occupation, it was Moraleh who had written it. He was one of the founders and leaders of Peace Now and served for a time as president of the New Israel Fund. Among his books are *In Pursuit of Peace: A History of the Israeli Peace Movement* and several works of reflection on issues of war and peace. He also dipped into politics, serving in the Knesset for two years as a member of the Ratz (Civil Rights) Party.



In 1968, Moraleh turned his energies and concerns to the wider Jewish world, taking on the leadership of the Youth and Pioneering Department of the World Zionist Organization, which initiated and coordinated numerous educational programs aimed at strengthening Jewish identity and ties with Israel among young people in the Diaspora. These programs involved tens of thousands of participants each year, both in Israel and abroad. During his nine years in this role, Moraleh, a native Israeli,





Moraleh on the Southern Front during  
The Six Day War, June 1967.

traveled extensively in the Diaspora, familiarizing himself with its contours, perspectives, and issues.

Though himself the product of a secularist upbringing and youth movement, Moraleh had a strong commitment to the future of *klal yisrael* in its many varieties. In 1971, I was working in his department producing educational materials for the various youth programs, my first job as a new *oleh*.

Moraleh was a warm, gracious, open-minded person, and he and I developed a rapport. One day I came to him with an idea I had been nurturing, of a new educational framework, here in Jerusalem, that would introduce Jewish young adults from the Diaspora to the textual sources of Jewish tradition in a spiritually serious but ideologically open-ended manner. It would involve a year of intensive, full-time, noncredit study, *Torah lishmah*. I had met many students who had come to Israel looking for something of this nature but had not found it, either in the universities or in the yeshivot. I had also approached a number of gifted teachers in the city, some of them well known, with my idea and I met with an encouraging response, in some cases even an eagerness to take part. I wanted Moraleh's advice about whether and how to proceed.

Moraleh immediately understood what I was after, and, to my astonishment, without hesitation, offered the backing of the department in the creation of the program. If I could pull together a curriculum, faculty, and student body, he said, and if teachers' salaries could be covered by tuition fees, he would make available a physical facility and cover the overhead. The following

year, several of the department's programs, scattered around Jerusalem, were to be consolidated in a new facility called Kiryat Moriah, in Talpiot, and the buildings they had been using would become vacant. One of these facilities, a cluster of three small buildings on Rehov Gad in Bak'a, then housing the Institute for Emissary Training, would be ideal for the proposed school. I would continue on the department's payroll, turning right away to the new project.

After a year of frenetic preparation, during which I set about assembling the programmatic and human elements, fixing up and furnishing the buildings, starting a library, and more, Pardes opened its doors in the fall of 1972. Most remarkably, Moraleh had acceded to my request that the department's sponsorship of the new institute not be mentioned in Pardes's publicity, so that it would not be seen as "establishment." (This was the tail end of the Sixties.) And indeed that was the case throughout the ten years that the sponsorship continued, after which the institute became a fully independent entity.

Without Moraleh's understanding and support fifty years ago, Pardes would most likely not exist today. We all owe him an enormous debt of gratitude. 🍷

To learn more about the life and writings of Mordechai Bar-On, see <https://www.mbar-on.net/about-en> and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mordechai\\_Bar-On](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mordechai_Bar-On).

# CAN TORAH BE BOTH DEEP & ACCESSIBLE?

*With Pardes North America it can!*



By Rabbi Mike Uram

There are moments in a learning community that are defining for the student and the teacher. This past year, as part of a larger expansion of Pardes North America (PNA), we launched a project called the Mahloket Matters Fellowship. Its purpose is to uncover profound Jewish and secular wisdom to heal the broken discourse in our world and its resulting negative impact on individuals. Together, our students and teachers embark on a journey consisting of two programmatic segments.

Segment one provides eight sessions of serious text study. Fellows grapple with the core ideas in the Mahloket Matters curriculum and engage in group discussions, which help fellows apply these ideas to their lives, families, and communities. Our fellows share, reflect, and heal while acquiring the new tools and foundational values that empower them to better navigate difficult conversations and inspire them to become change agents.

Segment two guides fellows to leverage their social networks and communities to expand the reach and impact of these ideas and build an ever-growing group of North American leaders committed to breaking down barriers.

PNA planned to pilot just two cohorts this year, but the demand was extraordinary. In total, between January and August 2021, we ran four successful cohorts. Two stories to the right, in particular, demonstrate the fellowship's impact. (Some specifics were amended for confidentiality.)

## STORY #1

A participant approached a faculty member after a powerful session and shared how the fellowship had changed his life after only a few weeks. Before the fellowship, he liked clean answers to complicated issues and savored being right and winning arguments. For years, this approach worked, but something changed. The tone and style of conversations became more explosive and angry. Rather than "winning," people pushed back on him faster and harder than ever. He was even pulled aside by family and colleagues and told that his aggressive style and failure to really listen were off-putting and out of touch. The painful rebuke put additional strain on important relationships.

He shared how the Mahloket Matters learning was transformative and gave him hope that he could change and repair these important relationships. The fellowship introduced him to new ideas. He learned to slow down, to appreciate complexity, to listen deeply, and to debate for the sake of understanding, not winning. He now uses his new skills to manage potentially explosive situations much more productively.

## STORY #2

Another fellow reported that Mahloket Matters changed how her politically diverse organization managed Covid policy challenges. Most attempts to develop mask and vaccination policies were acrimonious and unproductive. For her community engagement work, she launched conversations based on Mahloket Matters ideas to ground stakeholders in deep values and rules of engagement before taking on difficult policy discussions. The practice of beginning with texts and values transformed these political fights into opportunities to foster greater understanding, healing, and productive decision-making.

Survey data suggests that this positive impact is a common theme in the fellowship. Below is a sample of survey averages from different cohorts along with some narrative comments:

|   |      |
|---|------|
| Enhanced ability to have hard conversations & understand different viewpoints<br>(1=Strongly Disagree, 10=Strongly Agree) | 9.50 |
| Teaching quality of Pardes faculty<br>(1=Poor, 10=Excellent)  | 9.41 |
| Increased your excitement about Jewish learning<br>(1=Strongly Disagree, 10=Strongly Agree)                               | 8.64 |
| Would recommend this fellowship to a friend<br>(1=Strongly Disagree, 10=Strongly Agree)                                   | 9.05 |

*“I came into this fellowship really concerned about the Jewish community’s most pressing issues, and I left it equipped with a set of tools to make a difference in that conversation.”*

*“Pardes has given us such a gift in this fellowship! ...The fact that Pardes gives us the knowledge and funding to bring these positive tools to our own communities helps ensure that the gift we’ve been given ripples out far beyond just the ten of us.”*

*“This fellowship reinvigorated me as a learner!”*

The fellowship is just one example of the emerging strategies that are defining PNA’s work. Still, it’s important to note that while we are committed to bringing Pardes’s magic to North America and to use the power of learning

to transform Jewish life, PNA cannot, and should not, try to simply duplicate the experiences that Pardes has successfully provided in Jerusalem for nearly 50 years. The heart and soul of Pardes will always be grounded in Israel.

PNA’s work is different but complementary. We are filling a critical gap in North American Jewish life. Several strong organizations focus on creating deep learning experiences and are well-calibrated to serve advanced learners and those already connected to organized Jewish life. Similarly, several organizations use relationship-based engagement to create low-barrier social and cultural programming. PNA believes that depth and accessibility are not mutually exclusive. PNA is poised to be the first organization to blend text-based, content-rich learning with relationship-based engagement to reach new segments of North America’s Jewish population.

PNA is building a series of initiatives, curricular tools, a North American faculty, and field-building research to engage thousands of new learners in high-impact Torah study in three ways:

**1. Investing in our 6,000+ North American Alumni**

— PNA will both feed their hunger for learning and deputize them to become creators and conveners of new learning experiences to reach Jews not yet connected to existing opportunities.

**2. Investing in Leaders & Influencers** — PNA will work with select leaders and influencers to create high-impact learning experiences that expand their educational and relationship-based engagement capacities. In turn, they will identify and engage new populations of Jews with Pardes content and teachers.

**3. Fostering an ecosystem to advance Jewish Learning in North America** — PNA will host large-scale public events, expand Pardes Online, and engage in thought leadership and field-building work to foster an accessible and attractive learning ecosystem for North American Jews.

All of this will both advance PNA’s goals and strengthen existing Pardes programs in Israel.

This work is new, exciting, and experimental. The PNA team feels so honored to be part of it and we cannot wait to share more success and more learning as we grow. 🍷

*Rabbi Mike Uram is the Chief Vision and Education Officer of Pardes North America.*





# IF BEIT KAREN



## COULD *Talk*

**An interview with Matti Rosenshine, the architect of Pardes’s new home, Beit Karen.**

**When you design a building such as Beit Karen, where do you look for inspiration?**

Architecture is a storybook of culture, and it embeds within it many values. For me, one of the most important values is about memory and roots. I don't believe that buildings should be historic replicas, but I do believe they need to reflect their context, where they stand, and who the building serves. Tradition is another important value, because tradition helps us orient ourselves in respect to where and who we are. Architecture, in my view, should be linked in some way to tradition and context.

I also think about the intersection between values and beauty. Pardes is helping to cultivate text-intoxicated Jews, each in their own way. The environment in which that happens is not trivial or insignificant. Beit Karen is an incubator of ideas and the incubator itself is of great importance. These are some of the things that inspire me when I begin to design a new building.

**In what ways have you applied memory and tradition to Beit Karen’s design?**

The building’s facade is a wonderful example of memory and tradition juxtaposed with modernity. Texts have become the most inspiring component of the building, the Talmud page, in particular. The challenge is how, in abstraction, to express this idea to the public realm. When you look at the designed façade, you will see fields of perforated stone which create small windows of various shapes and sizes that are designed to abstractly invoke a page of Talmud. This idea of showing, in an abstract way, letters, words, sentences, and entire texts is something we want to express to the street, as if to say, “this is what we’re all about.”

**Pardes believes in openness and strives to make Jewish texts and traditions meaningful, relevant and accessible to all. How does Beit Karen reflect these values?**

Beit Karen has sacred and ordinary spaces within it. We can think of them as informal and formal spaces. Informal social spaces, like the student lounge, are



absolutely trying to be open to the street; to help invite people in. We're trying to express this with large openings of glass, where at night people will see light and activity; a hub of life and vitality taking place in the city. Our objective is to ensure that Beit Karen's identity is clear, fits the urban context, and is in dialogue with pedestrians. We're actively trying to avoid a design that would give the sense of an ivory tower.

But there are also formal, more spiritual study spaces, such as the Beit Midrash, which are more introverted and closed to the street but, in keeping with Pardes's values, are still not completely opaque. As I mentioned earlier, the windows on the facade invoke a page of Talmud. What I did not mention is what sits behind those windows, which is the Beit Midrash, the heart of Pardes. We want people to walk by who might not know what Pardes is all about, but still sense that there's something very intriguing going on there.

### How does the design deal with creating meaningful spaces for study within a vibrant urban context?

To start, people don't come right off the sidewalk, in the door, and boom, you're at Pardes. How does a person come from the chaotic world on the outside, with noise and traffic, and make an appropriate transition into Pardes's home? To do this, we would like to lead the visitor through a sequence. The access to the building will be a process of walking along the side, through green areas and landscaped spaces, where there's an acoustic transition. So, when you finally enter the building, you've already begun to separate yourself from the outside.

Introducing architectural drama is another element, but not overdramatizing. When a person enters the building they perceive there's a change happening. The design communicates to the visitor that something different is about to take place here and that helps to prepare one for the study of Torah. This is also achieved by materials, acoustics, and light. Basically, using all of your senses to reacclimate yourself to the change in activity that one is about to experience.



### How does Beit Karen's design facilitate the values of belonging and connections between people?

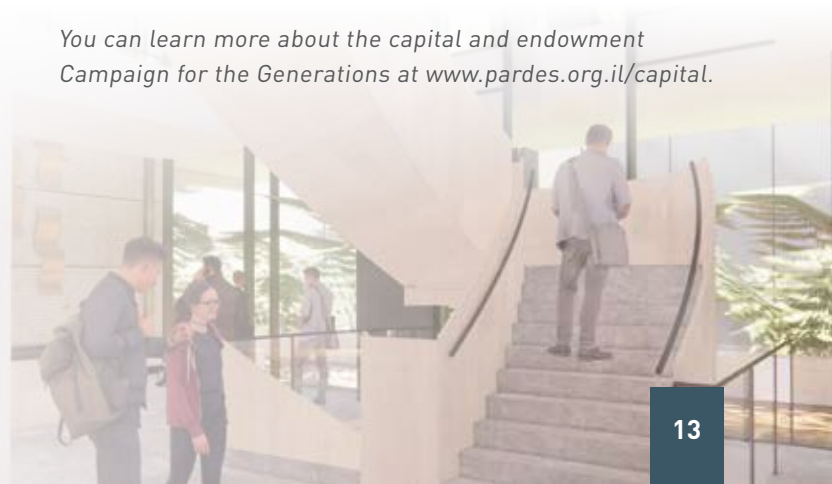
I think that the proportion of the spaces, the quality of light, surface texture and materiality are all very conducive to how we feel when we're studying. Are we isolated from the outside enough? Is it a good incubator to come up with ideas? But Torah study is not just about a person and a text in the Beit Midrash. It's about the interaction between people as well. Incidental connections between people are often where the most important ideas are born, by just bumping into someone in the hallway. So we think about how one space is connected to the other, how both horizontal and vertical circulation works, in such a way that new ideas will come about between people.

How people move between floors matters as well and we've designed Beit Karen such that people will always encounter others. It's a three-dimensional design that allows people to see each other between floors using atrium and double-height spaces. We do this while still trying to make spaces that maintain more intimacy.

### If Beit Karen could talk, what would it say?

I think it would say something like, "Architecture, which strives to express itself by reflecting harmony and beauty, is generated by external light. But true beauty emanates from the spiritual light from within. This light, which reflects who we are, our heritage and our future, awaits you." 🍎

*You can learn more about the capital and endowment Campaign for the Generations at [www.pardes.org.il/capital](http://www.pardes.org.il/capital).*





# STREAMING LIVE!

The early stages of construction on **Beit Karen**, Pardes's new home, have begun, and you can watch it all live!

Visit [www.pardes.org.il/beitkaren](http://www.pardes.org.il/beitkaren) to access the live stream, find ongoing updates and renderings from the architect.

## FUNFACTS

**2,825,000**

cubic feet of earth will be excavated. That's equal to 32 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

**260,000**

pounds of steel reinforcement bars will be used, about the weight of two space shuttles.

**20,350**

feet of excavation piles will be used. That's higher than Mt. Kilimanjaro.

**5,400**

square feet of reinforced concrete panels will be installed.

**79 feet**

The depth of the excavation site, about the height of a six-story building.

While construction is a resource-intensive enterprise, building a Green facility is an important priority for Pardes, reflecting our commitments to the environment, the health of our students, faculty and staff, and to Torah. Israeli Green Building standards are similar to the US LEED system and Pardes is working to achieve the highest certification possible.





# Beit Karen בית קרן

## The Future Home of Pardes

### Campaign for the Generations

Pardes thanks the many donors who have generously contributed to the construction and support of our future home and programming. You have invested not just in Pardes, but in the future of the Jewish people.

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This listing includes donations of \$5,000+ through October 2021. More information about the Campaign, including the complete donor list, can be found at [www.pardes.org.il/capital-campaign](http://www.pardes.org.il/capital-campaign).

# ALUMNI

STUDENT LIFE DURING COVID

## Reflections



### Two recent Pardes students reflect on the 2020–21 Year Program experience.



**David Schapiro**

Experiential Educators  
Program 2020–21

Berlin, Germany

**W**hen I told folks in Germany about Pardes, I always referred to it as a pluralistic yeshiva.

Often, people didn't understand what that meant, and many were surprised to learn that such an institution could exist.

It was important to me to describe it this way, because that's the language folks at home understand. Pardes is a yeshiva. It's a place where you sit and learn Torah. And being pluralistic is what makes it special among yeshivot and what brought me to Pardes.

I have been active in pluralistic contexts before, but learning Torah in this context took it to a whole new level for me. As Pardes's President, Rabbi Leon Morris, says, "We all learn the same Torah!" That's exactly what makes it so beautiful for me.

In fact, the moments that stand out most are those when pluralism was both showcased and challenged. For example, I represented the Orthodox minyan on the Rosh Chodesh planning committee. We were tasked with creating one communal prayer service in which all minyanim could comfortably participate.

Thank God, after trying out different approaches, we found solutions that made most people happy. Still, there were other issues to negotiate. After services we enjoyed a communal breakfast in the park. Our approach to Birkat HaMazon, therefore, also needed to be addressed. With faculty guidance, we came up with a format that allowed everyone to feel comfortable, both leading and participating, regardless of their denomination.

The experience that stands out most occurred during my final Shabbat in Jerusalem. I had invited friends for a meal and unintentionally included rabbinical students from a spectrum of denominations. The discussion that ensued about the differences and similarities between their schools, tracks and professions was wonderful and lively.

While pluralism defined much of my experience, sadly, Covid did as well. It was frequently impossible for us to learn face-to-face in the Beit Midrash. With classes mostly online, I could have returned to Germany and continued to participate from home. What kept me in Israel, though, was an intense feeling of community despite the physical limitations. In small groups, outside



when the weather allowed it, we made a point to have Shabbat meals together, which we greatly looked forward to, especially during the more restrictive periods of quarantine.

A major takeaway from my year is that everyone, no matter their education or upbringing, has their own special Torah to offer. I have also realized the incredible value of learning with all genders. Coming from a gender-separated school, this was anything but obvious. I now advocate for mixed settings, otherwise, we miss out on the perspectives of a large percentage of the population.

Pluralism works and it's beautiful. It's also hard work, but I believe that it's essential to making us better Jewish brothers and sisters and better humans, all members of a vibrant and colorful global community. 🌍



### Hannah Greenberg

Day School Educators  
Program 2020–22

Yardley, PA

The closure of the Israeli consulate made it difficult to get a visa, but it didn't stop me. Knowing I would be alone in quarantine for two weeks didn't stop me. The cancellation of my flight (twice!) didn't stop me. The Covid pandemic was still raging in August 2020, but I was determined to reach Israel!

The reality of going only set in as I walked through an empty Newark airport. It was surreal. Was I the only one flying? It turns out I was not. I boarded a crowded flight full of fellow Jews going to Israel, each of us with our own aspirations. I knew I was doing the right thing by pursuing my goal of becoming a student at the Pardes Center for Jewish Educators, my next step towards becoming a Jewish day school teacher.

Once in Israel, there were constant challenges. Classes oscillated back and forth between online and in-person as Israel's Covid guidelines fluctuated. It was challenging to meet people, but Pardes prevailed. Our weekly "Take-5" provided an online forum for students to share and make connections virtually. Second-year Fellows also worked tirelessly to facilitate connections.

A favorite memory took place just before Sukkot. A lockdown prohibited us from celebrating with non-family members, which brought us to a panic. How could we celebrate Sukkot without a community or a sukkah?

Incredibly, within 24 hours, Pardes helped us build sukkot using donated materials. The frame and *s'chach* came from Rav Rahel Berkovits, my Talmud teacher; the walls from a fellow student; string and a hammer from a friendly neighbor. Trekking across Jerusalem to get supplies was a communal effort and

adventure. Sukkot 2020 truly embodied what it meant to open one's sukkah to *ushpizin* (guests) and create community despite restrictions.

We also built connections during Pardes community Hallel. Reciting Hallel is a joyous occasion in shul, replete with singing. In our case we improvised, first meeting outside, then online, outside again, and eventually in the Beit Midrash.

We worked, as well, to create a monthly davening space that allowed us to be together despite differences in practice. I loved the singing, celebrating the holidays or new months. Our voices unified in prayer showcased our strength and the bonds we held.

For Purim, Pardes organized a *megillah* reading and Purim *shpil* (amusing skits) at a park, again allowing us to celebrate safely as a community.

One skit riffed on the sentence, "You know you are at Pardes during a pandemic when...." My answer was, "You know you are at Pardes when faculty, staff, and fellow students go above and beyond to ensure that the community is able to learn and join together despite the challenges." Covid did not stop us.

Tractate Eruvin teaches that one way of building community is through our feet. Even when we could only travel a kilometer from home, Pardes created virtual spaces that allowed us to forge ongoing connections.

The skills and connections I gained at Pardes are invaluable and I am excited to be back for another year. I cannot wait to see where my feet will take me as I pursue my goal of becoming the best possible Jewish educator, even during a pandemic. 🌍



# Thank YOU

Pardes thanks all of its generous Annual Campaign donors. Your contributions strengthen the Jewish people by providing student scholarships and organizational support that enable students to have a life-changing experience studying Jewish texts in Jerusalem and across the world.

We have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of this listing. Please notify us of any inaccuracies or omissions at [info@pardes.org](mailto:info@pardes.org). We sincerely regret any errors. This listing includes Annual Campaign donations from September 2020 through August 2021. If one or both donors are alumni, they are listed in red.

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# BOARD Updates

This fall **Deborah Shapira** and **Sherwin Pomerantz** stepped down from their roles as chairs of the North America and Israel Boards of Pardes, respectively. Pardes is deeply appreciative of their leadership, commitment to excellence, and tireless dedication to our work. There is no aspect of Pardes that they did not both touch and improve. May they go from strength to strength!

Pardes is thrilled to welcome **Mark S. Freedman** and **Morlie Levin** to their new roles as chairs of the North America and Israel Boards of Pardes, respectively. Mark and Morlie bring tremendous talent and experience in the fields of Jewish education and organizational leadership.

## WELCOMING NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The Israel Board welcomes **Brad Grob**, **Nathaniel Jhirad** and **Jonathan Tassoff**.

The North America Board welcomes **Ilana Meskin** and **Suzanne Wachsstock**.

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# MAKE FOR YOURSELF A *Mentor* עֵשָׂה לָךְ רֵב



## THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATING EDUCATORS

### Joe Brophy and Jennifer Unis Truboff discuss entering the field of Jewish education and where the field is headed.

*Joe Brophy graduated from the Pardes Center for Jewish Educators flagship program, the Pardes Day School Educators Program (PEP), in May 2021. In this piece, he speaks to his professor Jennifer Unis Truboff, Adjunct Professor of Jewish Education at Hebrew College, who is a 2007 graduate of the Pardes Day School Educators Program.*

#### **Joe: What advice do you have as I start my career and what are the biggest challenges facing new educators?**

**Jen:** Find a mentor to help with your transition into the classroom, ideally one who can give practical support on educational matters and be sensitive to your emotional needs. One of the biggest challenges new educators encounter is that teachers often teach alone. I encourage new teachers to seek employment in schools with strong cultures of teacher collaboration and a commitment to professional development.

But don't stop there! As a PCJE grad, take advantage of our alumni network and the support you will receive from Pardes as a novice educator, including individual mentoring and site visits by PCJE staff.

#### **Joe: Where is the Jewish day school field headed?**

Like our American counterparts in public education, we have spent the past two decades focused on improving instruction and curriculum. Policy scholars expect American schools will proceed along this path, so we probably will as well. This means a continued emphasis on the early training and ongoing professional development of teachers (like what Pardes offers) and leaders in the field. This strategy is research-based. We know that academic performance hinges upon the instructional capabilities of teachers and how well leaders cultivate instructional expertise in schools.

Publishers and Jewish studies teachers will also continue formalizing curricula. The introduction of learning standards for core subjects of the Jewish studies curriculum has animated this process across the field and within many schools. But we still have a lot to do.

#### **Joe: That's surprising. Improving curriculum and instructional methods are essential. Why weren't they pursuing these goals?**

**Jen:** There were significant albeit short-lived efforts in these areas after WWII until the early 1980s. Yet, the role of American schools was to uphold democratic values like equality, equity, and individual freedom; and this is one reason why assimilated Jews first opened non-Orthodox day schools during that time. The purpose of schools has since shifted to supporting the American economy by preparing graduates for college and careers in a globalized marketplace. A standardized curriculum that



teaches 21st-century knowledge and skills, along with accountability measures targeting instruction, are the tools to accomplish this. Hence our current foci.

Over the past ten years, this policy context and parental demands have transformed and improved the day school's general studies curriculum. Today, teachers use advanced teaching methods like blending technology into classroom learning, personalizing student learning using student data to differentiate curriculum and instruction, and implementing progressive educational strategies. Jewish studies teachers have adopted several elements of these practices, but there is much work to be done.

### **Joe: What educational changes do you foresee?**

**Jen:** More Jewish studies classrooms, or entire schools, will change their look and feel. These changes will be a response to the growing number of voices claiming that the current educational model makes it challenging to bring vibrancy and personal relevancy to the teaching of Jewish literacy, values, and practices. They argue that this is why some students are uninspired by their Jewish learning. Such sentiments are part of a movement advocating to reimagine Jewish studies in day schools through curricular and instructional innovations that have and will continue to make inroads.

We unpacked this issue in our class together and explored some of their alternative classroom models. Many of you expressed enthusiasm for them, as you saw how they allowed educators to align the classroom learning experience with how the Torah, the Talmud, and the 21st-century Jewish community envisions Jewish learning. In these examples, classroom learning is organized around students' lived experiences in their homes and communities. The result is that classroom activities include, but are not limited to, text learning, and Jewish wisdom is transmitted and internalized by students through learning relationships.

### **Joe: Which day schools are doing this?**

**Jen:** In our class, we "visited" Luria Academy of Brooklyn (headed by a PEP alumna) and The Idea School in Tenafly, NJ, just two examples of schools founded according to this outlook. Numerous smaller-scale initiatives are happening within "traditional" schools.

### **Joe: How do they measure their success as they iterate their pedagogy and curricular models?**

**Jen:** Jewish philanthropies and organizations that share this vision often provide funding to educators seeking

to innovate. They offer them training, guidance, and evaluation tools. Schools also have internal metrics.

As a class, we experimented with this different educational orientation. After designing Jewish learning experiences for your future classrooms, I was deeply encouraged by the class's creativity. PEP alumni often become instructional leaders at their schools and in the field, so I am confident that many exciting changes await the Jewish studies classroom.

### **Joe: How much will the Jewish studies paradigm shift or adjust?**

**Jen:** We will see noticeable changes because the field has proven it can be done. Also, day schools work hard to recruit and retain families, especially if there are other Jewish, private, and/or strong public schools nearby. It's in their best interest to make sure that the entire day school curriculum provides students with a compelling educational experience.

### **Joe: How has Covid impacted the field?**

Prizmah's 2020–2021 survey of the field notes there was a 4.3% increase in enrollment in non-Orthodox Jewish day schools and claims that Jewish day schools outpaced other public and private schools by quickly offering families a safe, emotionally supportive, and robust educational option. Experts explain that since many schools had already integrated technology into their curricula and instruction for nearly ten years, they had an existing infrastructure and know-how to transition to remote learning more smoothly.

The study also notes that administrators, teachers, and support staff worked rapidly as a team to identify and institute creative educational solutions that allowed students to learn online and in person. This flexibility and adaptivity is not incidental. For years, many of these schools have nurtured collaborative relationships by building professional learning communities to tackle issues like instruction, curriculum, and student learning.

The Jewish community is unbelievably grateful for and in awe of these educators who have accomplished the impossible. Although it is still too soon to assess the long-term impact of Covid on Jewish education, prioritizing the training of teachers, leaders, and their professional growth has prepared them to overcome intense challenges. Irrespective of what lies ahead, the field is moving forward from a position of strength. 🌟

To learn more about the Pardes Day School Educators Program, visit [www.pardes.org.il/pcje](http://www.pardes.org.il/pcje).



# Arts at Pardes

## PRIMING THE CANVAS

By Ilana HaCohen

### BRUSH *Strokes*

The creative process can be deeply personal — and powerfully relational.

The arts can transcend words or playfully reframe them, opening up possibilities for responding to Jewish text.

The arts push us to experience our traditions, rituals, tensions and aspirations in ways that heighten our awareness, challenge our assumptions, and lift our spirits.

The Pardes Arts + Culture Fellowship carves out space within the Year Program for creative commentary on the worlds within and beyond the Beit Midrash. Fellows pursue a self-directed project informed by their learning. In parallel, they infuse the larger Pardes community with a spirit of creativity through workshops and programming. Lastly, they guide others in encountering the local arts scene,

which provides a powerful window into Israeli society. Fellows meet, experiment with ideas and techniques, share works and explore the intersection of the arts and Jewish text more broadly.

Beyond the Fellowship cohort, others have brought the fruits of their learning to light in creative ways. Last year, guided by faculty advisor Rahel Berkovits, students launched *Pardes Hayyim*, a journal featuring *divrei Torah*, poetry, prose and visual art. This year, Monday Night Seder offers a recurrent Arts Beit Midrash space, anchored in learning, creative prompts, and reflective practice.



*Descent for the Sake of Ascent, acrylic on canvas. Rebecca Schisler (Year '19-'20, Experiential Educators '20-'21)*



### *Setting* THE STAGE

While the Fellowship launched in 2015, Pardes has a long history of empowering artists — from rappers to dancers to calligraphers — enabling them to delve into the wellspring of rich source material found in traditional texts. “I entered Pardes as a committed musician and writer, with little in the way of Jewish education,” shares award-winning artist Alicia Jo Rabins (Year ‘98-‘99, Fellows ‘99-‘00). “Gaining access to the textual, midrashic and mystical traditions of Judaism



has enriched my creative practice in profound ways.”

Alicia Jo is the author of two poetry books, *Divinity School* and *Fruit Geode*, and the creator and performer of *Girls in Trouble*, an indie-folk song cycle about women in Torah, as well as the independent feature film, *A Kaddish for Bernie Madoff*. [www.aliciajo.com](http://www.aliciajo.com).



*Shalom*, by sofer sta”m Rabbi Dov Laimon, who teaches Scribal Arts at Pardes.

## FINDING OURSELVES IN THE Text

Pardes approaches text study with a dual commitment to rigor and relevance. This involves respecting the integrity of the text within the context it was written while mining it for lessons or tensions that can inform our experiences today. The Fellowship aspires to these same commitments, providing a depth of Jewish literacy that has not always been accessible to artists inspired by aspects of their tradition.

For her Fellowship project, playwright Claire Abramovitz (Year ‘20-‘21, Fellows ‘21-‘22) crafted monologues exploring hopes, fears, and struggles through the voices of textual figures whose perspectives are otherwise absent. “My goal,” reflected Abramovitz, “is to understand not just how human they were, but also how much of them we now see in us.”

Written during a pandemic year marked by loss, shifting



norms, resilience and rebuilding, Claire’s monologues brought new resonance to ancient stories. The audience sat rapt as she portrayed R’ Yohanan ben Zakkai as he was smuggled out of Jerusalem in a casket past the Romans:

*“You’ll want to cry. But you don’t. Repeat what you have to say when you reenter the world of the living. Ground yourself in these words. Ground yourself in your demands. Ground yourself in your prayer for this small miracle. Ground yourself in small salvation, the chance for it....”*

## Deep LISTENING AS A RADICAL ACT



For Emma Blau, a 2020–21 Fellow and trombonist, the pursuit, practice and performance of music that draws from different cultural traditions is personally transformative and politically powerful, inspiring us towards deep listening:

*“Our world is largely shaped by reductive impositions of identity...Music defies these*

*bounds of oppression and allows transcendence to ideal worlds. Music enables communication with those you are kept from. It puts sounds into space that might otherwise be silenced.... As long as we can continue to imagine and even experience pieces of a reality we now can only deem ideal, our pursuit for a transformed, just world cannot die.”*

## Choreographing OUR NEXT STEPS

As Pardes explores making space for creative pursuits that dialogue with text, we eagerly anticipate the opportunity to invite the arts more robustly into Beit Karen, Pardes’s future home, which will house an auditorium and aim to showcase works by contemporary Jewish artists. The surrounding neighborhood — a commercial center dotted with studios and workshops — is also an evolving canvas, with vibrant murals offering visual commentary to those who work, study and shop nearby. Whether indoors or outdoors, we are reminded that the creative process is itself a sacred act, worthy of recognition and celebration. As Rav Kook wrote:

*“Literature, painting, and sculpting are able to bring to fruition all the spiritual concepts engraved in the depths of the human spirit, and so long as one brush is missing, which is stored away in the depths of the spirit — which ponders and feels — but has not been realized, there is still an obligation on the purposeful work to realize it.... These treasuries... sweeten the air of all existence. It is good and beautiful to open them.”* 🍷





*Rebecca Schisler (Year '19-'20, Experiential Educators '20-'21), "Return Again," acrylic on canvas.*

[www.pardes.org.il](http://www.pardes.org.il)

Jerusalem  New York

[info@pardes.org](mailto:info@pardes.org)

