



COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

We look forward to learning together!

NOTE: Morning Tanakh (Bible) and Talmud (Rabbinics) courses are offered at multiple levels. All other courses - except where noted - are open to all levels.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 8 (15 TEVET)

8:30-9:00 / Breakfast pastries

9:00-9:45 / Opening Session - Telling our Stories

10:00-12:00 / Origin Stories: Biblical Beginnings and Talmudic Tales

Law and Narrative in *Bamidbar* (Numbers)

[Daniel Reifman](#)

TANAKH (BIBLE) / BEGINNER

One of the distinctive features of the book of Bamidbar is the series of stories featuring communal sins followed by swift divine punishments: fires, plagues, snakebites, chasms -- the list goes on and on. How should we understand the harshness of God's responses in these stories, and what does it tell us about this formative period in Jewish history?

Going Away to Study Torah or Stories About How to Maintain a Normal Work-Life Balance

[Nechama Goldman Barash](#)

TALMUD (RABBINICS) / BEGINNER

We will explore a carefully-curated selection of seven Talmudic stories, examining both their wonderful literary structure as well as the broader issues presented. Despite the value placed on Torah study in rabbinic society, it is clear that too much of it can prevent a healthy work-life balance leading to catastrophic consequences for spouses and children. When reading these stories, we can consider the price that is paid when we are unable to find a balance between worthwhile and satisfying occupation and sustainable nurturing relationships with those around us.



The Story of Creation as Told by Mishnah Berakhot

[Rahel Berkovits](#)

TALMUD (RABBINICS) / INTERMEDIATE

The Mishnah is more than just a code of Jewish law; it is a window into the philosophy and theology of the Rabbis. By focusing on literary structure, the use of significant words and phrases, and the meta-themes running through the text, one can unpack the hidden story the Mishnah tells with its thoughtfully edited structure. In this session, we will study in depth the first four *mishnayot* of the sixth chapter of Mishnah *Berakhot*, which describes the liturgy and guidelines for making blessings on food. At first glance, the text appears very straightforward; however, upon closer examination, a number of questions arise. Why are all the food blessings presented within the rubric of fruit and things that grow from the ground? Why should bread and wine receive special blessings? What does the text think about curses and human desire? What interpretation of the creation story is the Mishnah telling us?

Dying Words: A Father's Final Story

[Tovah Leah Nachmani](#)

TANAKH (BIBLE) / INTERMEDIATE

The dying words of Yakov to his children herald the end of a dramatic era. The story of the long awaited and pain filled reunification of Yakov's family will not end "happily ever after", for after his death begins the gradual persecution and enslavement - in the land which once offered them freedom and protection. How do Yakov's dying words of rebuke (!) attempt to prepare his children for the challenges of their life ahead? What can we take away from these intimate moments, as Yakov prepares to die?

Our Chosen Narrative: Conflicts of Leadership, Acts of Violence and Religious Passions

[Leah Rosenthal](#)

TALMUD (RABBINICS) / ADVANCED

We will study two conflicting Talmudic narratives of a pivotal moment in Jewish history -- the parting of the Red Sea. Through close reading of these two narratives, we will discover conflicting perceptions bearing on moral, theological and social themes, many of which continue to occupy our thoughts and attention to this day. We will trace the choices made by the Talmud in its narrative of our past, and attempt to appreciate the implications of these choices in the development of Jewish tradition.



Liabie by the Laws of Heaven: Bava Kamma Chapter 6

[Zvi Hirschfeld](#)

TALMUD (RABBINICS) / UPPER ADVANCED (KOLLEL)

Together we will explore a sugya from the sixth chapter of *bava kamma* that deals with cases that are deemed "liable according to the laws of heaven," but exempt according to human courts. Every case of damage or harm has a story behind it. How we think about the implications of that story determines whether there is liability. Some stories resist easy definitions. These are those cases.

12:00-13:15 / Lunch Break (those joining public art tour - meet 12:45 outside)

BYO lunch or purchase from one of many bakeries / cafes / falafel stands nearby.

13:15-14:30 / Electives

Esther: A Story of Divine Concealment and Human Initiative

[Michael Hattin](#)

TANAKH (BIBLE)

Megillat Esther is the only book in the Tanach that does not contain even a fleeting mention of G-d's name. We will consider this anomaly against the backdrop of the Megilla's plot, in which intrigue and ambition seem to leave little room for divine intervention.

BIBLIODRAMA / The Joys, the Fears, and the Hidden Years: Miriam's Story

[Yael Unterman](#)

ARTS

Using Prof. Peter Pitzele's wonderful psychodramatic role-speaking method, we'll take a deep dive into the story of Miriam the prophetess, asking "What was she doing between ages 5 and 85?" and "Where does her story touch our own?" (No acting involved, shy people welcome.)

Yael Unterman is an international lecturer, author, and Bibliodrama facilitator, holding Master's degrees in Jewish History and Creative Writing. Her books are *Nehama Leibowitz: Teacher and Bible Scholar* (NJBA finalist, 2009) and *The Hidden of Things: Twelve Stories of Love & Longing* (USA Best Book Awards finalist, 2015), and she has also published essays, stories, poems, and reviews. She has facilitated over 600 Bibliodrama workshops worldwide and performed in her own biblical solo show, "After Eden."



Our Present: The Child of Our Past and the Parent of Our Future

[Yiscah Smith](#)

HASIDUT / SPIRITUALITY

What is the legacy we have inherited from those who lived before us? What is the legacy we shall entrust to our future generations? What are our stories now in the present that connect the two? Drawing upon stories and lessons from Hasidic tradition, we'll examine our own roles as recipients, connectors, givers and agents of change.

These Walls Speak Volumes: A Public Art Tour of Talpiot (MEET AT 12:45 OUTSIDE PARDES)

[Dov Abramson](#), [Meesh Hammer-Kossoy](#) and [Leon Morris](#)

ARTS

Over the past several years, colorful murals have sprung up in the industrial spaces around Pardes. Join us as we take a closer look at the stories they tell, the questions they raise, and what they reveal about the deeper narratives of our neighborhood and society – including a British Mandate-era loophole and urban renewal efforts. We'll have the special opportunity to meet with [Dov Abramson](#), award-winning visual storyteller and designer, whose studio created a mural that raises critical social awareness around workers' rights. We'll then head up to Derech Hevron, where we'll explore the stories of a stunning Biblical-themed mosaic and the Russian immigrant artist who created it, asking: What's the role of public space in preserving the narratives of both artist and artwork?

Background: <https://www.jpost.com/in-jerusalem/talpiot-goes-to-the-walls-572533>

14:30-15:00 / Mincha / break



15:00-16:45 / Electives

"A Woman's Voice" in Maimonides's Responsa

[Levi Cooper](#)

HALAKHA (JEWISH LAW)

The desire to hear women's narratives in our hallowed tradition can be challenging. What stories would they tell us of their experiences with the Jewish legal system? While much must be left to our imagination, occasionally Jewish legal texts preserve women's voices. We will explore two responsa by the famed Maimonides as he adjudicates a difficult case of family strife. We will meet an extraordinary woman who spoke up for herself, contested a ruling of the renowned jurist and demanded her rights.

Removing the Bouncer from the Beit Midrash: Rabban Gamliel's Deposition

[Rahel Berkovits](#)

TALMUD (RABBINICS)

Rabban Gamliel of Yavneh is an incredibly imposing persona in Rabbinic tradition and his loud domineering voice finally becomes too much for the other scholars in the academy. In this session we will encounter the literary power of the Talmud as we study the story of Rabban Gamliel deposition as head of the Yeshiva in Yavneh. Is there room for multiple voices within the *Beit Midrash* and Rabbinic tradition? What does the ideal *Beit Midrash* look like and who should be admitted as a student?

From Selfie to Self: Telling our Stories with Poetic Beauty and Complexity

[Yoni Hammer-Kossoy](#)

ARTS

In this creative writing workshop we'll explore ways to move beyond selfies and snapshots to capture events in life and tell our unique stories. We'll unpack the many layers of time and place present in any given experience. Through selected sources, guided writing, and supportive feedback, this class will be a space to develop complexity and add poetic beauty to your storytelling voice. No previous writing workshop experience is required and all forms of writing are welcome and encouraged.

***Yoni Hammer-Kossoy** is a poet, translator, and educator, whose writing appears in numerous international journals and anthologies. A graduate of the Shaindy Rudoff program in Creative Writing at*



*Bar Ilan University and winner of the 2020 Andrea Moriah Prize in Poetry, Yoni's first poetry collection, *The Book of Noah*, will be published in 2023 by Grayson Books. Originally from New York, Yoni has lived in Israel with his family for almost 25 years.*

That's Not Funny! Exploring Israeli culture through the satire, Torah and controversy surrounding the Israeli TV show, "The Jews Are Coming"

Ittay Flescher

ARTS

Should my taxes pay to produce popular culture with which I disagree? In August 2020, hundreds of Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox demonstrators protested outside the Kan public broadcaster's offices in Jerusalem against its satirical TV show "*HaYehudim Baim*" ("The Jews are Coming") over its depiction of biblical and religious figures. The irreverent and acclaimed show employs sketches of biblical figures to comment on contemporary Israeli and Jewish social, political, and religious issues. Through watching a number of episodes from the series, this session will explore the richness of Israeli culture and its Jewish influences.

*Before making aliyah from Australia in 2018, **Ittay Flescher** was a high school teacher for 15 years in a range of Jewish Day schools where he specialized in using media, film and popular culture to teach Jewish Studies. He is currently the Education Director at Kids4Peace Jerusalem, an interfaith movement for Israelis and Palestinians, and the Jerusalem Correspondent for Plus61J Media. In addition, his best claim to fame is his partner in life, Carm Rose, who many of you know well!*

17:00-18:30 / Hasidic Storytelling

History, Aurality and Writing

[Levi Cooper](#)

HASIDUT / SPIRITUALITY

We will explore the roots of storytelling in Hasidic culture, and how it evolved over time from an aural experience in the days of the Ba'al Shem Tov (regarded as the founder of Hasidut) to one where people experience Hasidic ideas in print. How does the written word impact our capacity to be transformed by stories? What's gained? What's lost?



18:30-19:45 / Community Dinner (provided by Pardes)

19:45-21:00 / Keynote Session

(Re)Telling Our Stories: On the Hope for Innovation, Tradition, Renaissance and Moral Calling

[Tamar Elad-Appelbaum](#) in conversation with [Leon Morris](#)

Join Rabba Tamar Elad-Appelbaum (founder and spiritual leader of Zion: An Eretz Israeli Congregation, co-founder of the Beit Midrash for Israeli Rabbis), for a candid and compelling conversation with Pardes President, Rabbi Leon Morris, about the future of faith, culture and identity.



MONDAY, JANUARY 9 (16 TEVET)

9:00-12:00 / Origin Stories: Biblical Beginnings and Talmudic Tales

The Tower of Babel and the Midwives of Egypt: Comparing an Unlikely Pair

[Judy Klitsner](#)

TANAKH (BIBLE) / BEGINNER

In this session, we will unpack the enigmatic story of the Tower of Babel through the Bible's subtle method of word repetition. We will then seek further understanding by comparing the story to the narrative of the enslavement in Egypt, noting remarkable similarities in language and theme.

Power Struggle, Gender, and Seeing the Light in Creation Midrashim

Vivie Mayer (guest educator)

TALMUD (RABBINICS) / BEGINNER

On the fourth day of creation the Sun, the Moon, and the Heaven's Hosts are spoken into being. The Midrash (cited in the Talmud, Masechet Chullin 60b) takes us into an imaginative story of competition and hurt feelings between the Moon and the Sun that even God has difficulty assuaging. This primal story reflects the struggle for power and status that pervades the Book of Bereishit/Genesis. It also teaches us about the delicate and complex path of reconciliation.

***Vivie Mayer** is a Reconstructionist Rabbi in the process of making Aliyah. She taught at The Reconstructionist Rabbinical College for the last 16 years, serving as Director of the Beit Midrash and Director of the Preparatory (Mechinah) Program. For over 10 years she has taught introductory courses at the on-line Aleph Ordination Program of the Jewish Renewal Movement. For the decade prior to her work in rabbinical education, Vivie served as the rabbi of Congregation Bnai Israel in Danbury, CT.*

R. Eliezer's Last Words: Two Competing Narratives

[Zvi Hirschfield](#)

TALMUD (RABBINICS) / INTERMEDIATE

R. Eliezer was known as a great scholar and the teacher of R. Akiva and other great sages. His excommunication as a result of the "oven of Achnai" debate and the "not in heaven" controversy created a tremendous rift in the Rabbinic world. Together we will look at his biography, and how



two different accounts of his last words before death reflect two interpretations of how he dealt with his complicated past.

The Quest for a Mate for Isaac: The Tale as Told by Abraham's Trusted Servant

[*Howard Markose*](#)

TANAKH (BIBLE) / INTERMEDIATE

We have learned that Abraham bestowed the important responsibility of finding a wife for Isaac upon his trusted servant. We also have learned that with the help of the Divine, the servant succeeded in his mission, finding Rebecca at the well (spoiler alert!). What we might not have learned is that the recounting of this tale is found in our Biblical narrative not once, not twice, but three times. The servant creates an elaborate scenario which will serve as a litmus test, determining whether his mission could be considered a success. The event takes place, almost exactly as the servant had pictured that it would. Finally, the servant recalls the event a third time as he shares his experience with Rebecca's family. Are the three renditions of this story identical as they are found in the Biblical text? Our class will devote our energy to learning from the major and minor differences that are to be found in the three descriptions of this same exciting episode.

"Jordan River is Deep and Wide" (Joshua)

[*Michael Hattin*](#)

TANAKH (BIBLE) / ADVANCED

Stories in Tanakh, even when describing different and seemingly unrelated events, often inform each other. We will look at a formative story in the book of Joshua - the entry by the Israelites into the Promised Land - and compare it to some other provocative versions in Tanakh.

Profane Fire: A Closer Look at the Death of Nadav & Avihu

[*Elhanan Miller*](#)

TANAKH (BIBLE) / UPPER ADVANCED (KOLLEL)

The death of Aharon's sons Nadav and Avihu in Leviticus Chapter 10 seems quite clear-cut at first glance, but Midrash rereads their sin in interesting ways.

12:00-13:15 / Community Lunch (provided by Pardes)

How does food tell a story? Bring a favorite Jewish recipe to swap!



13:15-14:30 / Electives

The Flood Story as Told in the Ancient Near East

[Howard Markose](#)

TANAKH (BIBLE)

Everybody knows that Noah built an ark in order to survive the flood. How many of us are aware of the existence of another ancient story about a devastating flood that ended the vast majority of civilization? In this class we will endeavor to read the story of Noah and compare it to another ancient tale - the Epic of Gilgamesh - especially the story of a flood which brought destruction to this earth.

Halakha and Aggadah: The Role of Stories in Legislating Tzedakah

[Meesh Hammer-Kossov](#)

HALAKHA (JEWISH LAW)

The Babylonian Talmud is 2/3 *halakhah* (Jewish law) and 1/3 *aggadah* (narrative stories). What is the significance of the mosaic? We will test the theory of Haim Nahman Bialik's classic article "*Halakhah and Aggadah*" on the Talmudic corpus about Tzedakah. With any luck, we'll go out with a newfound appreciation for both *halakhah* and *aggadah*, as well as more clarity about our own giving priorities.

Narrative Voice: Journalism, Fiction Writing, Torah Teaching and All That's in Between

[Elhanan Miller](#) with [Zvi Hirschfeld](#)

CONTEMPORARY

When he's not teaching Torah, Elhanan Miller spends much of his time translating Jewish faith, culture and history - in Arabic - to Arab audiences through viral social media videos; reporting on Palestinian and Arab affairs for media outlets; and, most recently, penning and publishing a collection of original Hebrew poetry. How do language, audience, and medium shape the impact of one's message? Zvi Hirschfeld interviews Elhanan about the different narrative voices he has cultivated, and what draws him to each.

Interfaith Encounters and Shared Stories

[Amirit Rosen](#)

HISTORY / CONTEMPORARY

Come discover interfaith stories from the past and interfaith stories from today. What discoveries come about when different traditions coincide?



14:30-15:00 / Mincha / break

15:00-16:45 / Electives

The Art of Rabbinic Storytelling: Narcissus in the Temple

[Gila Fine](#)

TALMUD (RABBINICS)

Why is the Bible so afraid of love? Who were the lovers who saved the Jewish People? And how do the rabbis deconstruct one of the greatest love stories of their time? A reading of Midrash Tanhuma Pekudei 9, through Ovid and Maharal, the Brothers Grimm and Jacques Lacan, George Orwell and Erich Fromm.

The Man Who Came Back to Life, and Other Stories in Medical Halakha

[Daniel Reifman](#)

HALAKHA (JEWISH LAW)

The *halakhot* (Jewish laws) related to medical care are deeply influenced by modern science. Yet there is also a powerful pull exerted by narratives, like the story found in the *Tosefta* of a man who was interred in a crypt and subsequently found to be alive. We will consider the significance of such stories as they appear in modern responsa literature to better understand how halakhic authorities address issues in contemporary medicine.

Visual Arts Beit Midrash

[Sara Laya Heller](#)

ARTS

What drives us to tell stories of our past? What is the first story ever told? Why do WE tell stories? Through the exploration of Bereshit (Genesis) Chapter 2, we will dive into this topic and discover the connection between our personal identity and the stories we tell. We will be using the JSP (Jewish Studio Project) method and creative processes designed to open ourselves up to unfold and receive what the universe has to tell us. No artistic background or experience necessary - all are welcome!



Once Upon a Story: An Interactive Workshop

[David Levin-Kruss](#)

SKILL-BUILDING SESSION

We tell stories every day - whether at the water cooler, on social media, in a work presentation, educational setting or communal gathering space. In this class, we will learn and practice five skills for telling a great Torah story.

20:00-22:00 / Open Mic and Gallery Share

ARTS

It's time to tell your stories! This student-led festive culmination of the Pardes Winter Break Learning Intensive invites you to share a piece of yourself with the community – through song, poetry, dance, theater, stand-up, visual works-in-progress - or any other preferred medium. Snacks, drinks, listening and connecting - what could be better?