

HAVRUTA

THE PARDES INSTITUTE OF JEWISH STUDIES | DECEMBER 2024 | KISLEV 5785



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HAVRUTA

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

December 2024 / Kislev 5785

Dear Friends,

Our 2023–24 academic year took place with the war as our backdrop. With many children of our faculty and staff deployed as active or reserve soldiers, and amidst all the insecurity, our teachers and students kept our Pardes beit midrash alive and buzzing. Our online and North American programming provided a needed sense of community and togetherness. In our pursuit of Torah study, we found inspiration and hope.

This special edition of Havruta gives expression to the ways in which our commitment to Jewish learning inspired and strengthened us during these challenging days. Its pages illustrate how Pardes has been touched by the war and how it has contributed to a Jewish future grounded in purpose and content.

We are all so grateful to our supporters and friends, Pardesniks, one and all, who ensure that our open and inclusive beit midrash continues to thrive. For curious Jews searching for identity and meaning in their lives, for educators who desire to unpack complex issues for young minds, and for leaders-in-the-making seeking knowledge and skills to guide their communities with confidence, Pardes is the incubator and multiplier that continues to strengthen Jewish life everywhere. The outsized impact that Pardes has had on Jewish life for 52 years is hard to overstate.

With hopes of *besorot tovot*,

Rabbi Leon A. Morris



ABOUT THE ARTIST

SHAY PERY, ARTIST AND DESIGNER

Shay Pery, 42, is an artist and designer based in Pardes Hanna-Karkur. He is the father of Uri and Ayala, and the partner of Efrat. A graduate of Bezalel Academy's Ceramic Design Department (2011), Shay's work revolves around his deep connection to materials and their transformation through the artistic process.

For Shay, the studio is an artistic laboratory where he explores a wide range of materials and mediums, including wood, porcelain, and print. His creations span illustration, photography, and hands-on material work, which have been integral to his artistic journey for as long as he can remember. To him, the material itself is the inspiration—the act of working with it becomes the creation, where the process and the result are inseparable. His art serves as a tribute to the materials he engages with, highlighting their inherent beauty and potential.

The war brought a profound shift, halting both regular life and creativity. The shock and pain disrupted everything, including Shay's artistic inspiration.

At the start of the conflict, Shay contributed an illustration to the Post a Smile project, which invited creators to offer hope and uplift spirits during the challenging days of war. His piece, titled, "From the Break, Light Will Grow," is dedicated to Kibbutz Nir Oz, where he spent a year of service, as part of the Nahal group. The illustration portrays a path and a house at the kibbutz, much of which was devastated by the war. At its heart, the piece symbolizes hope for a future of renewal, envisioning a time when Nir Oz will bloom again. From the great rupture, great light will emerge.

COMMUNITY REFLECTIONS

"Let us examine and
probe our ways, and let
us return to the Lord."

Eicha (Lamentations) 3:40

“נחפשה דרכינו ונחקורה ונשובה עד ה’”

In light of the ongoing war in Israel, this past year, marked by loss, uncertainty, and moments of resilience, has been incredibly challenging for all of us. We recognize that many of our readers have faced their own struggles during this time, and we want to create a space to pause and reflect together. This section is dedicated to the stories and experiences that have shaped our community over the past year. We invite you to join us in reflecting on these events, finding strength and hope as we navigate this journey together. May these reflections offer comfort, inspiration, and a sense of solidarity, as we move forward.



RESILIENCE & HOPE

**A Journey with Pardes
amidst Adversity**

**DEBORAH
DENENBERG**

Deborah Denenberg is a theatrical producer and a communications coach at her company, Hark Communications. She is producing a children's play based on Justice Sonya Sotomayor's best-selling book, Just Ask! She is also a new member of the Pardes Board of Directors, North America.

My father, a WWII Navy officer who flew open-cockpit planes, died on the anniversary of D-Day and was buried on Rosh Chodesh Sivan. We found comfort in the timing. After shiva and Shavuot, I flew to Jerusalem to honor my father's legacy with Torah learning at Pardes.

I am an alumna of the Pardes 1979 Year Program. Returning this year, I was struck anew by the essence of this institution: its people. The bright, passionate, and compassionate faculty and staff are the heart of Pardes, embodying the warmth and wisdom that define the community. Their support during these challenging times was a beacon of comfort.

Visiting Israel now feels like a profound act of solidarity. How affirming and fulfilling it is to show support to our resilient brothers and sisters in Israel. How much taller I walk on this holy ground, free from antisemitism and outside opinions that seek to beat me down. It felt GREAT to be in the land, and it strengthens me as an ambassador to report on what I saw and heard directly, rather than what I see and hear in the news.

The Pardes Learning Seminar offered more than study; it included volunteering and witnessing the impact of the conflict. Our work with Pantry Packers and Chabad Kollel, though small, was deeply meaningful.

A visit to the Gaza Envelope revealed the stark reality of the war—burned-out cars, memorials, and the heartbreaking remnants of lives lost. Among these, a menorah crafted from destroyed rockets stood as a powerful symbol of transformation. This menorah, a beacon of light rising from the ashes of destruction, embodies the spirit of hope and resilience.

Pardes facilitated a journey of both learning and witnessing. The profound impact of seeing the aftermath of violence juxtaposed with the light of hope highlighted the strength of the human spirit and the importance of standing together. Studying at Pardes remains a transformative experience, as relevant now as it was decades ago. The community I found here and the lessons I learned continue to inspire me, reaffirming my commitment to this shared journey of Torah, resilience, and hope.



SAMANTHA COOPER

My two years in Israel have been anything but what I expected. I initially came here on a three-week trip from a small village in Guatemala, where I was living at the time. I ended up at Pardes on a whim, and I have been here ever since.

I grew up in Saskatchewan, Canada, which has a small but dedicated Jewish community. My home was secular, but I always felt a pull toward a Jewish life. Most of my Jewish learning and connection came from my Bubbie, a Hebrew teacher and lay leader at our home shul. From a young age, I have always been a spiritual seeker, leading me down many paths: yoga, meditation, and traveling to holy sites around the world.

During my travels, I ended up at a kabbalistic retreat center in Guatemala, where I stayed for three years. While I was there, I discovered my love for Jewish practice. I began hosting Shabbat dinners and was jokingly known as “the Chabad House” among friends. Over Zoom, my Bubbie taught me Hebrew, and my home rabbi taught me the ins and outs of Judaism on weekly calls. After three years of connecting more deeply with my Jewish roots, it was time to revisit Israel. In October 2022, I packed a carry-on for a three-week trip and haven’t left since.

When I arrived in Jerusalem, my intuition took over my rational thinking. A strong gut feeling, something deep inside, told me I needed to stay. At the time, I kept thinking, “What am I doing with my life? Why would I live in Jerusalem?” But somehow, I knew that, for whatever reason, Jerusalem was where I needed to be. A Pardes alumna, Jody Blum, scooped me up off the street one Friday night for Shabbat dinner, and she and her husband, Brian, suggested I study at Pardes. That night changed the course of my life.

After completing my first semester at Pardes, life as we knew it changed, when the world was turned upside down by the blaring sirens of October 7th.

Our teachers’ children, spouses of friends—everyone was called up or had someone in their family called up to serve. I was just a student at Pardes, with no obligations or family ties here.

So early on, I took advantage of the unique position I was in and did what many others did: I joined the “Citizens Army.” It became a way of coping with the new reality and helping, in a small way, with the overwhelming needs of the country.

At the start of the war, I posted on Instagram asking if anyone wanted to donate. Friends and family, Jewish and non-Jewish, sent in tens of thousands of dollars from abroad. Overnight, I had a large sum of money and needed to figure out how to use it best. With the help of Pardes, we opened a care package assembly center. Pardes let us turn one of the classrooms into a donation center, where the greater community could drop off toothbrushes, soap, canned goods, army clothing, etc. We used the donations from the Instagram posts to purchase shopping carts overflowing with beef jerky, army-white socks, feminine hygiene products, and more. It became a grassroots volunteer project. Pardes students would take a break from learning when they needed time to “pray with their feet.” They would join the assembly line in the classroom, making thousands of care packages for the 300,000 reservists who were called up to the army. The donation money was also used to provide hundreds of pairs of shoes, formula, diapers, clothing, and educational supplies for the evacuated families from the north and south who sought refuge in Jerusalem. Neighbors would donate time and items, students helped between classes, and teachers would drive the packages to drop-off points. As the world fell apart, the people came together.

From the start of the war until today, Pardes has not stopped teaching Torah. October 7th shattered the lives of so many. Our teachers, who have built their homes here and had children on the frontlines, still came to work every day. I will never truly understand how they are able to show up and teach, steadfast and unwavering, in these dark times. Pardes sustained a beit midrash full of students throughout the war, where Torah was not just being learned but lived.

I feel incredibly lucky to be here, that intuition took over reason, and I left Guatemala for Israel. As of last week, I am a new olah and feel privileged to be a part of a country where you can find mothers, grandmothers, students, and children getting together to make sure soldiers are fed and have clean socks. This country truly is one big family. And now, by coming to Pardes, I’m a part of that too.

Samantha Cooper, originally from Canada, just completed the Year Program at Pardes. She has since made aliyah and is currently studying at Hebrew University.

A LETTER TO RACHEL GOLDBERG



Rachel Goldberg (Year Program '95-'96, former board member), our beloved Student Support Coordinator, lost her son Hersh Goldberg-Polin, who was taken hostage by Hamas on October 7, 2023. For nearly a year, Rachel and her family fought tirelessly for Hersh's release. With profound grief, we mourn Hersh's tragic loss, alongside Rachel and her family. May his memory be a blessing.

Dear Rachel,

It is with the heaviest hearts that we write this letter, mourning alongside you and your family. Hersh's passing is a loss we never imagined, and there are no words that can encapsulate the depth of this tragedy. Hersh's memory will forever live on through the profound impact he has made on so many lives, and through the unyielding love and strength you have shown the world.

You have been a part of the Pardes family for nearly 30 years, first as a student, later as a dedicated board member, and most recently as our Student Support Coordinator. We were eager to have you step into that role this past year, knowing how deeply you would care for our students. But just a month into this new chapter, your world shifted unimaginably.

The grace, resilience, and tireless advocacy you have shown in the months that followed are beyond anything we have ever witnessed. As you fought for Hersh and for the other captives, you reminded us all of what it means to never give up hope, even in the darkest of times. You became a symbol of courage, a voice for justice, and a beacon of love.

At Pardes, we have always seen you as someone who leads with compassion, someone who nurtures and uplifts others. Yet this past year, it was you who gave us strength. You have embodied hope and faith for all of us, even when your heart was breaking. As you stood at podiums around the world, speaking to leaders and communities, your determination and spirit moved nations, including our own Pardes community, to come together in unity and prayer.

Now, as we mourn Hersh's loss, we hold you and your family close, offering whatever support and comfort we can provide.

In moments of grief, we turn to our tradition, reminding ourselves that:

קרוב יהוה לנשבר־יֵלֵב וְאֶת־דֹּכָא־רֹוּחַ יוֹשִׁיעַ

The Eternal is close to the brokenhearted; those crushed in spirit, God delivers. (Psalm 34:18)

We hope that in the coming months, you feel the nearness of those who love you and the comfort of your Pardes family, who stand with you, as we have through every moment of this long, heartbreaking journey. מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם תִּנּוּחָמוּ – may you be comforted from Heaven and find peace in Hersh's memory.

Rachel, you have given so much of yourself to the world this past year. Know that we are here for you, ready to carry you through this time, just as you have so selflessly carried us.

With love,

Your Pardes family

LEVI COOPER

I have been hosting the podcast, *A Shot of Torah*, since 2016, when Pardes sought to expand its digital library and test the waters in the new world of podcasts. My intention was to teach interesting and meaningful Torah. Responding to current events or politics was never my specialty. Over the past few seasons, current events kept sneaking in. From my Covid series about historical chapters of pandemics in Jewish tradition, to the Sacred Spaces series as we sat in the Pardes beit midrash with the jackhammers echoing as the construction of our new home proceeded (in addition to the construction of my shul in Zur Hadassa). I hoped to be able to contribute to the conversation with relevant Torah, interesting sources from our rich tradition that were perhaps not well-known.

But the most recent series on *pidyon shvuyim* - securing the release of captives - was qualitatively different. When discussing how many windows a synagogue should have, for instance, we are not talking about humans. We are talking about physical places, bricks and mortar. Yes, choices need to be made and our tradition has much to say about that. But it does not evoke the same emotional intensity. *Pidyon shvuyim* involves human beings, our brothers and sisters. Reading the classic sources before October 7th was primarily a theoretical and intellectual exercise, although even in modern times, there have been painful chapters of people being held against their will. In our current moment, it is a bitter and painful reality. For us at Pardes, our dear colleague Rachel's son, Hersh, was amongst the captives who was ever present in our prayers until his tragic execution by his captors. Another hostage, Elya Cohen, is one of my neighbors in Zur Hadassa, and we continue to pray for his freedom. So this is very present in my life, as I am sure it is in the lives of others.

Choosing to do that series on *pidyon shvuyim* was my way to contribute to the conversation, and to actively keep the hostages in my mind, heart, and prayers. To ensure that I and my listeners do not forget the plight of our imprisoned sisters and brothers, and their families.



While researching the series, I understood the complexity of the issues and how difficult it is to decide what is the best way forward for our people. Many of the sources were not new to me, but studying them this year transcended the boundaries of an intellectual journey to the challenges faced by our predecessors.

Harking back to those sources also provided perspective. For example, I explored issues from the 16th century, and more recently, the 1985 Jibril Agreement. While learning about those cases, the question of applying the sources today was always hovering in the background. This was an attempt to dig deeper than the soundbites we often hear today, to plumb the differences between Talmudic times, the Middle Ages, the 16th century, and the early years of the State of Israel. Where should we make distinctions? How should we apply the tenets we learned despite the differences? For me and for those who learned with me, my goal was to take the conversation to another level, make the conversation deeper and more meaningful, and admittedly also more complex.

My greatest pain is that when the series ended, those abducted - our brothers and sisters - were still not free; many have been murdered. I hoped that the last part of the series would be historical and theoretical, and even celebratory. Alas, that was not to be. For our people still held in captivity, hopefully that dream will be realized by the time this goes to press...

Levi Cooper, originally from Melbourne, Australia, has taught at Pardes since 1998. He is a Senior Lecturer in Bar-Ilan University's Faculty of Law and volunteers as a community rabbi in Zur Hadassa.

"THEIR WORDS ARE THEIR MEMORY"

In loving memory of Yakir Yamin ben Yehoshua ve-Chaya Hexter z"l

MICHAEL HATTIN

There are moments in life when the world around us collapses and we are caught in the heavy debris, unable to breathe. One of those moments happened after midnight on January 9. We were sleeping fitfully (who can sleep peacefully after October 7th?) when Rivka's phone rang at 12:30 am (who could be calling at such an hour??), jangling us out of bed. During my aged parents' last years there were sometimes such calls, since they lived in Toronto in a different time zone and my siblings needed to update me about medical emergencies. But my parents had left this vale of tears long ago...

At such moments, we fervently hope that the caller dialed a wrong number so that we may return to the oblivion of sleep and its blessed delusions. My wife answered hesitantly. On the other end, I could hear the strained voice of my dear sister-in-law Chaya. She came to the point abruptly, as there was suddenly so much for her to do in the new life into which her family had just been flung: "Yakir was killed in Gaza... the funeral is tomorrow." Immediately Rivka got up and headed to Jerusalem to be of whatever assistance she could possibly be. I was left, gasping for air, with the impossible task of rousing my children (those who were not already serving in reserves) before the dawn news hour when the names of the latest casualties would be made public.

I decided to let them sleep until a few moments before six – the thought of sharing the announcement before it was necessary was too unbearable. Our sages teach us that fast days – commemorations of national tragedy

– are not observed when they fall on Shabbat. Instead, we push them off until Sunday, rather than bringing them forward to Thursday. Why relive calamities before you absolutely must? But my dread only became more acute as the night dragged on. How would I tell my children that their precious cousin was dead and taken away in a fiery whirlwind, a cousin who was always there for them, a legendary part of their lives? Yakir was no regular kid. He had the face of an angel, the kindness of a saint, the iron will of a superhero. Wherever he went, his presence lit up the room, but he took up none of the space because he left room for everyone else. After high school, he studied in a *hesder yeshiva* and quickly became a respected member of the *beit midrash*. During that time, he also served in the IDF, distinguishing himself for his single-minded dedication. With Yakir, there was no such thing as just muddling through.

After he completed his army service, Yakir enrolled in university and applied for architecture. As I am a lapsed architect myself, he consulted me about the entrance application that included a design problem, but he didn't need my help. Yakir was incredibly capable and unbelievably determined – an irresistible combination. Whatever challenge he chose to engage was accomplished in the best possible way. As his third year of studies began, Israel was viciously attacked by the terrorists of Hamas and their Gazan henchmen, and Yakir was immediately called up to the reserves. He had no qualms about fighting in Gaza because he knew that it was necessary and he knew that it was just. When his first stint ended, he returned home only to be called up again. He could have declined – after all, he was 26, his



second year of studies had begun, and he had already done his time. But the thought of his comrades fighting without him was unconscionable. So he went back in, braving cold rain and dodging hot bullets, until he fell in battle on the 27th of Tevet 5784 / January 8, 2024.

Since his death, our family and extended family are not the same. Not a day goes by when we don't mention him and no family event ever takes place without his memory being invoked. When we remember Yakir, it brings us comfort – a childhood moment, a funny story, or a mischievous anecdote. But Yakir's memory is more than that – for our family, he continues to challenge us to live our lives better, more focused on what is important, more full of goodness and joy (his smile was as big as the world), more appreciative of life and those whom we love, and more aware of those who may need our love.

Our sages teach us that when a person is buried, we mark their grave (*Mishnah Shekalim* 2:5). In the Jerusalem Talmud, Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel offers a curious qualification:

רַבָּן שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיֵּאל אוֹמֵר: אֵין עוֹשִׂין נִפְשׁוֹת
לְצַדִּיקִים, דְּבִרְיָהוּ הֵן זִכְרוֹנָן.

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: We make no grave markers for the righteous because their words are their memory.

Even though our current practice is different, Rambam actually decides the *Halakha* in accordance with this view (*Laws of Mourning*, 4:4). What might have been Rabban Shimon's thinking? It seems to me that he was

referring to Yakir. A gravestone is heavy and adamant, etched deeply with the name of a loved one who is no more because we desperately want to preserve their memory that must otherwise fade and disappear over time. But when the memory of a loved one is also a charge to the living, when it is not so much about bringing us comfort but more about continuing to have an impact on our lives and the lives of our children, then it lives on forever. No ponderous monolith is needed. That is Yakir's memory for me. May his soul be eternally bound up in the bond of life

Michael Hattin is a senior faculty member at the Pardes Institute who teaches Tanakh and Halakha. He is the author of three books on biblical texts and lives in Alon Shvut with his family.

SADNESS

**NIKOLAY
KOLYA
UVAROV**



Reflecting on my journey through war and upheaval, I realize how profoundly different the conflicts in Russia and Israel have been for me. These experiences have shaped my sense of identity as both a Jew and an Israeli.

When the war in Ukraine began, my experience in Russia became increasingly unsettling. I had been part of a vibrant Jewish community in Saint Petersburg, engaging with various Jewish organizations and taking on leadership roles. However, as the war progressed, I could no longer reconcile staying in a country whose political actions I deeply disagreed with. While I was connected to family and friends in Russia, and I knew people in Ukraine, I didn't feel a personal connection to the war. What I felt was a strong ideological aversion, and I knew I couldn't stay in Russia.

Making aliyah to Israel was meant to be a fresh start for me. I came to Pardes with the anticipation of immersing myself in Jewish learning and finding growth as both a person and an educator. But just a few weeks into my studies, on October 7th, the war broke out in Israel. Unlike the conflict in Russia, this war in Israel felt immediate and personal. As soon as the war began, it was clear that this experience would be different. People around me were mobilizing, some for reserve duty and others to volunteer.

While some students in the Pardes program chose to leave the country, it was clear to me that I would stay. Throughout the year, I continued to study and develop my skills in text and pedagogy. Exploring questions about my Jewish identity became even more important amidst the uncertainty. Although I considered leaving at times, I ultimately decided to stay and continue my studies. I believe this was the right choice for me as a Jew and an Israeli.

Through all these experiences—leaving Russia, arriving in Israel, and facing the reality of war—it's become clear that life is full of unexpected turns. Yet, my connection to the Jewish community and to learning has remained constant. Whether in Russia, Israel, or elsewhere, the pursuit of understanding my roots and deepening my sense of belonging to the Jewish people continues to guide me. I look forward to continuing my work as a Jewish educator.

***Nikolay (Kolya) Uvarov**, a Russian-born Jewish educator, made aliyah to Israel and studied at Pardes 2023–24. Amidst the challenges of war, he deepened his Jewish identity and pedagogy, continuing his commitment to Jewish learning.*



**RABBI MAYA
ZINKOW**

This past year at Berkeley Hillel has been both challenging and transformative. Our Jewish community faces significant pressures, particularly the expectation to choose among various identities and affiliations during this tender stage of development. This is especially difficult for Gen Z students, for whom identity is a profound aspect of their lives. They find themselves in a situation where they feel bifurcated, often torn between conflicting aspects of their identities, due to the polarized political landscape in America and the complexities surrounding Israel.

Navigating these challenges has not been easy as a campus rabbi, but doing so has reinforced the importance of education and honest communication. At Hillel, we strive to create an environment where students feel safe to explore their multifaceted identities. We provide the space for students to both be themselves and engage with other Jews across a spectrum of political beliefs. Our goal is to help students understand their own place in the Jewish world, hold multiple perspectives, and navigate the complexities of

Jewish identity and Israel with both honesty and a deep sense of connection.

My journey to become a rabbi, which began with two years of study at Pardes in Israel, has profoundly shaped my approach to these challenges. Pardes gave me the tools to navigate complexity and nuance, emphasizing the value of engaging with the full spectrum of Jewish tradition and thought. The experience of studying Torah at Pardes taught me how to find meaning in the tension between different perspectives, a skill that has helped me guide students through the complex conversations we face today, providing them with a framework for understanding and empathy.

Reflecting on my experience teaching at Pardes this summer, I was moved by the beauty of students connecting through Torah learning. It was a reminder of the power of returning to Jewish texts, especially in challenging times. The joy of seeing students engage deeply with Torah, ask difficult questions, and find their own connections to the text was a powerful affirmation of the work we do. This experience reinforced my belief in the importance of creating spaces where students can explore and grow together through learning.

While the challenges are real, they are not insurmountable. The mainstream media and social media often amplify divisions and seed binary thinking, but the reality on the ground is more nuanced. At Berkeley Hillel, we continue to support our students in navigating their complex identities, emphasizing that they do not have to choose between parts of themselves but can embrace all aspects of their Jewish journey. I hope to work toward strengthening the relationship between Hillel and Pardes, empowering more Hillel professionals to deepen their own Jewish identities — however complex — so that they might have the tools to help their students do the same.

***Rabbi Maya Zinkow** is the campus rabbi at UC Berkeley Hillel. Ordained by The Jewish Theological Seminary in 2021 as a Wexner Graduate Fellow, she is a Pardes alum (Summer Program 2013, Year Program 2014–2016) and has taught at Pardes in summers 2023 and 2024. She lives in California with her partner, Michael.*

HOPE



Faculty members **Rabbi Dr. Meesh Hammer-Kossoy** and **Rabbi Rafael Polisuk** discuss the essence of hope and how we can harness it to affect growth and change.

MHK: At any mention of the word hope, I see and hear in my heart Rachel Goldberg, our Student Support Coordinator. "Hope is mandatory" is her motto. A message as black and white as the masking tape label she wears near her heart to mark the days of the captivity of over 100 souls.

Before we delve into the idea of hope and the sources in our tradition, I feel we need to start by making it personal. What does hope mean to you and where do you draw it from?

RJP: I also think part of the answer comes from Rachel's inspiration. She has been a model for hope for me during the war. Because seeing people who are hopeful, despite hardships and pain, gives us perspective and can empower us to make positive choices. I think this is something very important about the Pardes community as well.

We have chosen to continue learning, to continue being together, to continue being a hopeful community.

MHK: What does the Torah say to you about hope?

RJP: My immediate association of hope in the Torah is the idiom for the Jewish people from Zecharia 9:12 that reverberates throughout the Days of Awe liturgy:

שובו לבצרון אֶסִירֵי הַתְקוּהָ...

Return to Bizzaron, You prisoners of hope...

Captives, or prisoners of hope. Maybe even hostages of hope? Zecharia uses the language of war. It is very beautiful. Poetic. But puzzling. What does it actually mean to be a hostage of hope? The classical commentators divide the verse. Many interpret it to mean 'captives who have hope.' The Jewish people in captivity who never lost hope.

While this makes sense, and follows a pattern of logic, the language of the verse does not lend itself naturally to such an interpretation. If we look to the root of the Hebrew word for hope – *tikvah* – in Genesis 1:9, it comes from the word *l'hikavot* (gathering water):

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יִקְוּ הַמַּיִם מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם אֶל מְקוֹם
אֶחָד וְיִתְרָאֵה הַיַּבֶּשָׁה...

God said, Let the water below the sky be gathered into one area, that the dry land may appear...

It is a difficult word to translate into English. It means a gathering, but in a downstream motion or flow, to a lower basin. A *mikveh* (in the next verse) that God created and called the seas.

That's interesting to think about since we like to think

about hope as uplifting. But I see that the word *tikvah* tells us, in a very primordial sense, that hope is about something that gets gathered in a type of inward flow. Even downstream. Hope is something we fill ourselves with. It's not external to us, above or below us. In this sense hope and despair are in the same place: our soul. And there's no running away from either. We tend to say that hope is a form of trying to escape despair. You know... rainbows and unicorns. But what the root of the word is telling us is that *tikvah* means being in that downstream basin, in the most fragile reaches of our soul, making choices to fill and refill it again and again.

MHK: In his great work, *Pahad Yitzhak*, Rabbi Yitzhak Hutner asks, why is it that during the Ten Days of Repentance, we add Psalm 130 to our prayers, calling to God "from the depths" to "redeem us from our sins"? What's the connection between the depths and redemption? He posits that the connection is this idea that you become a vessel. The emptiness that we feel is from being distanced from God and it is a vessel for us to fill up with repentance. So that the emptiness becomes an opportunity. I hear that in what you are saying. Moments of pain, of emptiness, of yearning become opportunities to be filled with hope. In the same way it could be filled with prayers. This is a very powerful message. And one that is deeply rooted in our liturgy. Like in the third verse of the *Kabbalat Shabbat* poem, *Lecha Dodi*:

קוּמִי צְאִי מִתּוֹךְ הַהֶפְכָּה. רַב לָךְ שָׁבֶת בְּעֵמֶק הַבְּכָא.

*Arise! Come forth from thy ruins. Long enough
have you dwelt in the vale of tears!*

Or our own national anthem, *HaTikvah*, is based on Ezekiel's prophecy of the valley of the dry bones. A metaphor for a place believed to be without hope. But there is hope even when things seem so hopeless...as they were for the Jewish people when *HaTikvah* was composed. Our tradition is telling us that hope springs specifically from the worst moments in our lives.

But let's revisit something we mentioned before about

using hope to avoid or escape despair. Is there danger in having hope, to clinging to hope when things are in fact very desperate? "False hope" perhaps.

RJP: Yes. I think that there is. In Lamentations 2:14, Jeremiah admonishes the people:

נְבִיאֶיךָ חֲזוּ לָךְ שָׁוְא... מִשְׁאֹת שָׁוְא וּמְדוּחִים:

Your seers prophesied to you... oracles of delusion and deception.

Jeremiah is not talking about the standard admonishment about idolatry. He alludes to prophets claiming that even though we sinned, even though we were promised two generations ago that Jerusalem would be destroyed, God loves us and will not let it happen. And that this put us in an even worse position because we could have actually done something to brace ourselves. Not stop the destruction, but make it so that we could emerge in a better place. The delusional belief that God would not allow the destruction to happen and we can rest on our laurels because there is always hope was a serious, serious problem.

But I think that in its true and authentic form, Jewish hope is planted deep inside us. It is very introspective. And in this form, not dangerous. Authentic Jewish hope is not external to us. It is gathered like water in the basin at the depths of our souls. Hope that leads to complacency is dangerous and the kind of hope that can break us. And draw us into despair when false hopes do not deliver.

How many times have you heard, from people across the social and religious spectrum, that they just want to get back to the day before the war began? I think these are the words of prophets of false hope. This should not be the foundation of your hope. Because what was before wasn't okay.

MHK: This reminds me very much of something Rabbi Jonathan Sacks said about the difference between optimism and hope, which you are calling "Jewish hope." He says, "Optimism is the belief that things are going to get better. Hope is the belief that if we work hard

enough together, we can make things better. It needs no courage, just a certain naivete to be an optimist. But it needs a great deal of courage to have hope.” He says that there is responsibility that comes with hope. Don’t just assume things will be better, but actually do something about making it better.

Of course, not everything is in our power. I think about the hostages and I think it’s so important for us to be protesting and to be calling on our government to make sound decisions if need be, but also to recognize that it’s not all in our hands and that there are factors beyond our control. We need to recognize we cannot fix everything. For me, hope is also letting go and trusting in God and accepting that it’s not all on us.

RJP: There is a *midrash* in the *Mehilta*, that also appears later in other works, on the verse in the Song of the Sea that speaks to this beautifully:

מִקְדָּשׁ הִ' כּוֹנְנוּ יָדָיו:

The Temple of God, [which] Your hands (God) established

The *midrash* asks how can God’s hands establish a sanctuary to God? What hands? Throughout the exodus from Egypt, God has ONE hand... the long, outstretched one! And God didn’t build the Temple. We did. The *midrash* poses a beautiful answer: The Jewish people have one divine hand and one human hand. They work in unison as if they are two hands of the same person. I find this beautiful imagery deeply comforting. It offers

the perfect balance. Because both models — that our future and fate are only in God’s hands, and that our future and fate are all in our hands — are deeply flawed. The goal is to work in sync and together with God.

MHK: This touches on where hope meets our work teaching at Pardes. I draw hope from seeing how many students were raised with very little Jewish education, but felt the pull of Judaism and created the opportunity on their own with great effort. Seeing and teaching people who have come to reclaim their heritage and own their tradition so they can be relevant players in Jewish history. I am hopeful when I see them transformed by the Torah. Each in different ways. One to become a great Reform rabbi, another to be an Orthodox lay leader. Each is rooted in understanding our tradition and Torah.

RJP: I see hope in that each student is part of building something meaningful. Like building a marriage or establishing a new home. Every single Jewish person that gets back into the conversation, no matter how daunting it is. One step at a time. When you do it that way, every single interaction becomes so meaningful. This is something very grounding... and very hopeful. The world is a better place because of this student, and I become more connected because of my interaction with that individual. Every student is a world by themselves. I see hope in each connection, each small step, one at a time, to fill the world with hope together.



BEYOND THE SIDDUR: The Depths of Jewish Prayer

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pardes.org.il/seminar

UPDATES

Resilience Amidst Challenge: Pardes in 2023–24



The 2023–24 year has been marked by significant trials. As our communities faced the realities of war and conflict, the spirit and resilience of Pardes shone brightly. Despite these challenges, our programs not only endured but thrived, reaching and educating countless individuals worldwide. The dedication of our staff, faculty, and alumni brought hope and healing to many, extending the light of Torah and Jewish learning into diverse communities. Even in the darkest times, our commitment to sharing the wisdom of Torah with the world remains unwavering.

Pardes Launches Innovative Teaching Program

At Pardes, we believe in the transformative power of education and are committed to bringing great teachers into Jewish education, regardless of their prior background in Jewish studies. This year, we launched the General Studies to Jewish Studies (GS2JS) program, designed to help general studies teachers in Jewish day schools transition into Jewish studies teachers.



Over 18 months, participants undergo intensive training, starting in the summer and continuing with weekly one-on-one virtual sessions with experienced mentors, focusing on texts and topics they are likely to teach. Participants also fill gaps in their Jewish literacy through tailored independent readings and pedagogy tutorials.

A highlight of the program is the Pardes Summer Program, which offers in-depth text study, educational tours of Jerusalem,

and in-person mentorship. This immersive experience equips participants with enhanced content knowledge, Hebrew skills, and practical teaching tools, such as unit outlines and lesson plans, for the upcoming school year.

The GS2JS program is designed with flexibility in mind, allowing schools to adjust the Jewish studies teaching load for participants as they transition. Feedback from the program's pilot phase has been overwhelmingly positive, emphasizing both enthusiasm and key considerations, such as the need for financial compensation to acknowledge the teachers' time and effort. As we look to the future of Jewish education, we remain dedicated to developing programs that serve our educators and the broader community of Klal Yisrael.

Shavuot Night 2024: "What Comes Next?"



This year's Tikkun Leil Shavuot at Pardes was a landmark event, featuring 16 outstanding speakers and scholars and drawing double the attendance of the previous year. Over 700 attendees gathered to hear speakers like Judy Klitsner, who reflected on the post-October 7th reality, and Haviv Rettig Gur, who explored the theme of resilience. In a unique dialogue between art and Torah, Rabbanit Nechama Goldman Barash and artist Andi Arnovitz captivated the audience, while Rabbi David Levin-Kruss inspired with his insights on finding courage in challenging times.

The evening's theme, "The Day After Sinai," provided a framework for exploring moral, spiritual, and religious questions centered on resilience, strength, and hope. Through a blend of intellectual and experiential learning, attendees engaged in a uniquely Pardes educational experience. Partnerships with Or HaLev, Nefesh B'Nefesh, and Israel Story contributed to the event's success, bringing in both exceptional speakers and a large audience.

One standout session was led by Dr. Oded Adomi Leshem, who spoke on hope in times of crisis, resonating deeply with attendees. The Israel Story session was hosted by podcast host Mishy Harman and included Yisrael Campbell, Sarah Tuttle-Singer and Ittay Flescher. Rabbi Leon Morris discussed surrender as a source of strength and faith, and Aviva Lauer offered insights into the midrashim of women affected by October 7th.

The program also featured interactive experiences, such as a bibliodrama on the Book of Ruth, led by Yael Unterman, which focused on transforming pain into purpose. Rabbi Dr. Meesh Hammer-Kossoy examined the complex themes of the sin of the Golden Calf, and

Or HaLev's meditation and yoga practice, "All the Nation Saw the Voices," provided a holistic conclusion to a meaningful night of learning.

Alumni Use Microgrants to Innovate in Education



Pardes is not just about studying Jewish texts; it's about equipping all who join us with the skills to lead and inspire in the Jewish community. Through its microgrants program, alumni are transforming their communities with innovative Jewish learning initiatives.

In Brooklyn, Tehilah Eisenstadt (Year '00-'01) launched "Survivor's Shiva," offering trauma survivors a space for healing through Jewish rituals. Her organization, "Wonder and Repair," focuses on elevating marginalized voices.

In New Haven, Rabbi Josh Pernick (PCJE '13-'14) and Tani Cohen-Fraade (PCJE '12-'14) founded the New Haven Beit Midrash, a bi-monthly learning hub that collaborates with local Jewish institutions.

Brooklyn's "Selah: Jewish Learning through a Recovery Lens," founded by Arielle Krule (Summers '14 & '20), combines Jewish texts and recovery wisdom to address life's challenges.

Lisa Richman (Summers '13 & '14) runs "Better Together University" in Philadelphia, an intergenerational

program fostering learning across generations.

These initiatives, along with many others, demonstrate how Pardes alumni are carrying forward the spirit of the institution, promoting Jewish learning and community leadership well beyond the Pardes Beit Midrash.

The Beit Midrash Goes to Budapest

Under the stained-glass dome of Budapest's Dohány Synagogue, the Pardes Pop-Up Beit Midrash brought Jewish learning to life amid rose windows and grand arches. Designed to immerse students in Jewish culture and history, this week-long program offered rigorous study paired with hands-on experiences, connecting participants with both Jewish heritage and contemporary Jewish life.



Following the success of last year's trip to Berlin, the Budapest cohort spent Shabbat with the local community and engaged in a week filled with intensive Torah study led by Pardes faculty. Rabbanit Nechama Goldman Barash and Rabbi Zvi Hirschfield delivered inspiring morning shiurim, while Dean Emeritus David Bernstein guided site visits, offering a deeper understanding of the city's Jewish past and present.

"My favorite part of the day," shared

one student, “was studying Torah with participants from all walks of life and sharing our stories with each other. Touring Budapest was the icing on the cake.” This year, the program hosted 45 attendees, each deeply engaged with local Jewish heritage sites, witnessing the evolution of Budapest’s Jewish community.

Community Leaders Join Mahloket Matters Cohort



In *Pirkei Avot*, the rabbis teach that an argument for the sake of Heaven—a *mahloket l'shem Shamayim*—is one destined to endure. Building on the value of constructive disagreement, Pardes introduced its inaugural cohort of High Impact Field Leaders to explore the principles of Mahloket Matters and consider how these values can be woven into the fabric of the Jewish communal sector.

“We all come with different backgrounds and perspectives,” states one of Pardes’ communal norms. “We respect and honor our differences and believe that our diversity is a strength.” Over four sessions and a reunion, community leaders from various Jewish

organizations and sectors studied together, seeking new ways to infuse their work with Jewish values.

The sessions used the concept of *mahloket* as a springboard for discussion and learning. How do we prioritize and balance competing values in the professional world? What role does compromise play on the path to truth? How do we assume responsibility as leaders while also balancing multiple perspectives and hearing our voices that deserve to be heard?

“Be careful NOT to be surrounded exclusively by those who agree with you,” wrote Sarah Raful

Whinston, principal at DRG Talent Advisory Group, reflecting on her key takeaways from the cohort. Her number one piece of advice: “Sit so everyone can hear and see one another.” Through listening, learning, and debating, community leaders discovered that Judaism is the art of listening, and found ways to navigate toward a future that values dialogue and constructive conflict, even if it isn’t always peaceful.

A Summer of Connection



Despite the challenges of the security situation, Pardes successfully held two impactful sessions of its Summer Program, providing participants with a meaningful and enriching learning experience. Students from diverse backgrounds gathered in the beit midrash in Jerusalem, engaging deeply with Jewish texts and each other, finding relevance and purpose in their studies during complex times.

Faculty and staff took necessary precautions to ensure the safety of all involved while maintaining the high quality of the program. The experience provided students with a unique opportunity to process current events through the lens of Jewish wisdom, fostering a sense of connection and reflection. Many participants noted the strong sense of community that developed during the program, with learning becoming both intellectually engaging and personally supportive.

“Our students and faculty showed great commitment this summer, highlighting the importance of Jewish learning, even during challenging times,” noted Pardes President Rabbi Leon Morris. “It was a reminder of the vital role our community plays in offering thoughtful engagement with Jewish texts.”

BEIT MIDRASH OF THE FUTURE

No space in our new Beit Karen building has been as carefully considered as our Moshe and Libby Werthan Beit Midrash. We envisioned a place that fosters a radically inclusive community of learners, united in their love for Jewish texts. The design process has been both challenging and exciting. How could we create a space that welcomes students of all backgrounds, ages, and levels of study? How would we ensure their differences spark new learning and dialogue that enriches everyone's experience?

Rabbi Dr. Meesh Hammer-Kossoy, our Rosh Beit Midrash, and senior faculty member, Rav Rahel Berkovits, visited *batei midrash* at institutions in Israel like Nishmat, Mahanayim, Migdal Oz, and the Conservative Yeshiva. "We were struck by how diverse they are," said Hammer-Kossoy, "and how those differences can shape learning norms. Every beit midrash is a unique reflection of the community within it. If the Torah is this powerful in our old, dingy space, how inspiring will it be in our new home, designed specifically for our needs?"

The result is a space that encourages personal encounters. Even when studying individually, students will feel surrounded by supportive peers. The entrances are designed to spark natural interaction between

people, while the layout nurtures both intimacy for personal reflection and openness for group discussion. We've created an environment that fosters connection—both to the texts and to each other.

As we look to the future, we are also entering a new era of digital learning technologies. Just as Jewish learning shifted from oral study to manuscripts and printed books, today's technology offers exciting new opportunities for engagement. But these advances come with important questions: Is more technology always better? What do we lose when we move away from the tactile experience of physical books? How do we balance tradition with innovation in a way that keeps the learning process authentic? Our new beit midrash will continue to explore these questions as it embraces both the old and the new.

The Moshe and Libby Werthan Beit Midrash was designed to support different modes of learning. The furniture is flexible and can be easily rearranged for group discussions or personal study. Thoughtfully designed niches throughout the room provide cozy spaces for smaller group study, fostering the kinds of meaningful connections that are so central to the Pardes experience.



MEASURING

IMPACT

2023–2024 IN NUMBERS



594

Learners in UK
and European
Programs

3,165

People Reached by the

**MAHLOKET
MATTERS**

Curriculum

1,220



310

Students in
Immersive
Programs

Community
Education
Learners



214,868

Podcast Listens

266,067

Website visits



965,000

People Reached
with Social Media

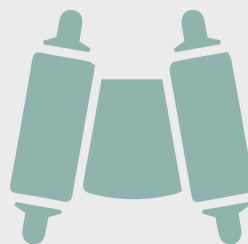
63%*

of Pardes Students
said their confidence
in participation in
communal Jewish life
was improved



90%*

of Pardes students
expressed a desire
to continue
engaging in Torah
study after Pardes



92%*

of Pardes
students reported
increasing their
overall Jewish
literacy



120%*

Increase in students'
commitment to
make Jewish life
relevant for our times

* Source: Kopelowitz, Ezra, and Stephen Markowitz. Impact of Pardes on Students' Jewish Identification. Research Success Technologies & Markowitz Consulting, 2 Sept. 2024

THE PARDES ANNUAL FUND

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"Being at Pardes
 was one of the most
 enriching experiences
 of my life. Within 5 days
 I learned, created life-
 long friendships, became
 a part of a thriving
 community and opened
 my mind to a journey
 that I'm so excited to
 embark on."

—Kim Zoller, PLS
 Summer 2024

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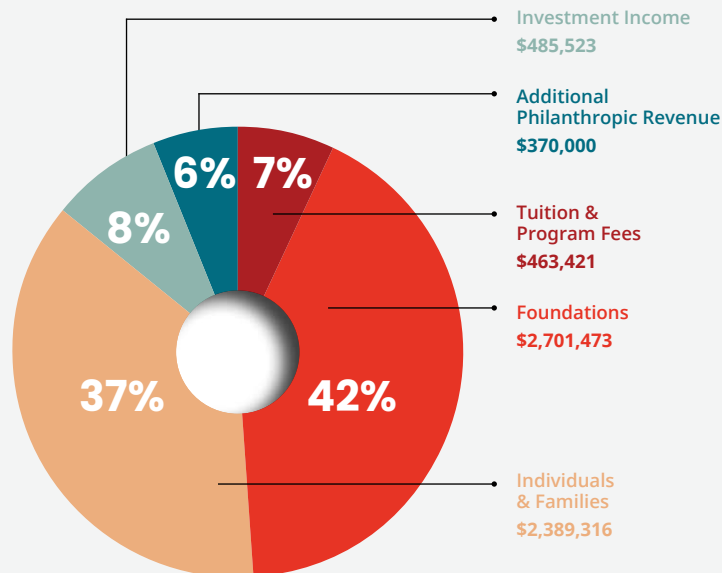
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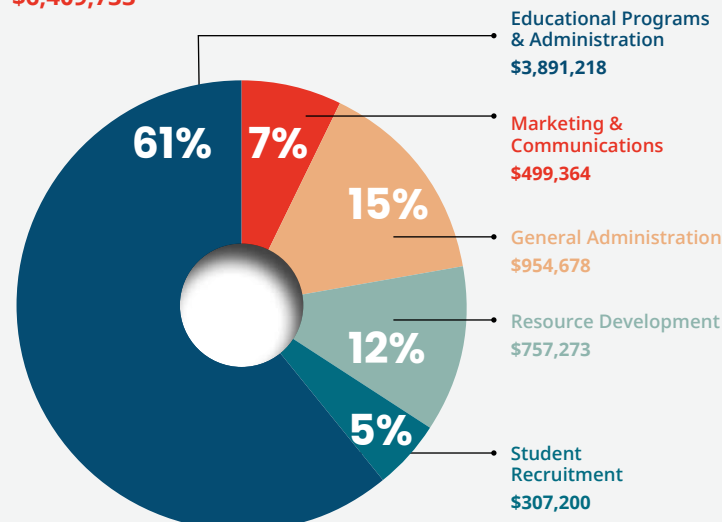
2024 Projected Revenue

\$6,409,733

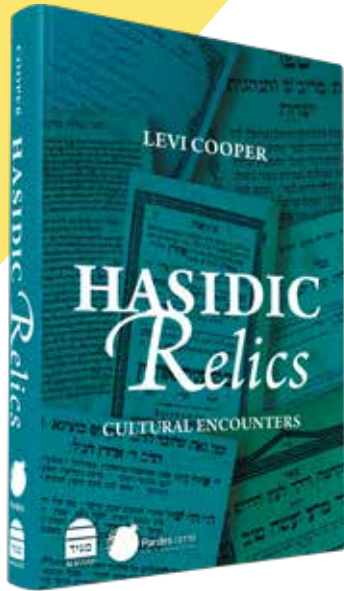


2024 Projected Expenses

\$6,409,733



BOOK CORNER



Hasidic Relics: Cultural Encounters is published by Maggid Books and is available at korenpub.com

RABBI DR. LEVI COOPER

HASIDIC RELICS: CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS



Over the decades, Rabbi Dr. Levi Cooper has brought his unique brand of rigorous and illuminating study to many subjects at Pardes. From his doctoral dissertation on the interaction between Hasidism and halakha to his Jerusalem Post column that gave him the nickname “The Maggid of Melbourne” and beyond, Rabbi Cooper has cultivated a deep understanding of Hasidism that spans geography and history. *Hasidic Relics: Cultural Encounters* (October 2023), his third publication with Maggid Books, addresses what is lost when Hasidism is transmitted without context. “How often,” he asks, “have we heard a speaker open with the words ‘There was a hasidic master in a small town? Which master? Where is this town? And was it really so small?’”

The chapters in this text highlight and restore crucial contexts, presenting what he calls “fragments of the larger story of Hasidism – the movement, the thought patterns, the personalities, the communities, the narratives, the ideas, the inspiration, the history, and the culture.” This attention to detail extends from analyzing tumultuous cultural shifts and variations to tracing how the spelling of a town’s name changed as national borders were reconfigured half a dozen times. Yet instead of losing the dramatic emotional sparks ignited by Hasidism, Rabbi Cooper’s exacting care for specificity makes them blaze ever brighter.



Uncovered: Women's Roles, Mitzvot, and Sexuality in Jewish Law is published by Urim Publications and is available at urimpublications.com

RABBANIT NECHAMA GOLDMAN BARASH

UNCOVERED: WOMEN'S ROLES, MITZVOT & SEXUALITY IN JEWISH LAW



In *Uncovered: Women's Roles, Mitzvot, and Sexuality in Jewish Law* (2024), Rabbanit Nechama Goldman Barash weaves a rich tapestry of history, halakha, and identity of women’s roles in traditional Jewish life that encourages readers not to take things simply as they are. For instance, *Berachot 24a* teaches: “R. Isaac said: ‘A handsbreadth [exposed] in a [married] woman constitutes *ervah*.’” However, there is no such analogous teaching regarding men. For Goldman Barash, this gross disparity isn’t the end of the matter, but the beginning of an exploration



The Madwoman in the Rabbi's Attic: Rereading the Women of the Talmud is published by Maggid Books and is available at korenpub.com

GILA FINE

THE MADWOMAN IN THE RABBI'S ATTIC: REREADING THE WOMEN OF THE TALMUD



Bringing her trademark blend of precision and empathy to Talmudic analysis, Gila Fine's *The Madwoman in the Rabbi's Attic: Rereading the Women of the Talmud* employs an exacting methodology to revisit stories of six women. "In all of rabbinic literature," writes Fine, "there are just fifty-two named women, as opposed to over a thousand named men. Of these fifty-two, only half a dozen are heroines of their own Talmudic narratives: Yalta, Homa, Marta, Heruta, Beruria, and Ima Shalom." The six subjects of *The Madwoman in the Rabbi's Attic* embody anti-feminist archetypes: the shrew, the femme fatale, the prima donna, the madonna/whore, the "overreacherix," and the angel in the house. Fine reads these stories within richly curated historical and narrative contexts to plumb their depths in a manner that can only be accomplished through reading and rereading Talmud, encouraging us to take nothing for granted in its study.

"Gila Fine's work," says Miriam Anzovin of TikTok phenomenon Daf Reactions, "is what you get when women study and teach Talmud: unbelievable, incandescent, astonishing teachings that bring us closer to the text and to understanding our people, our history, and how to be better human beings in this very unpleasant world."

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks described Gila Fine as "one of the great Talmud teachers of our time" and *Haaretz* noted that she is "on her way to becoming one of the more outstanding Jewish thinkers of the next generation." The *Jerusalem Post* described her as "fast becoming one of the most fascinating teachers in the field." Pardes students who have attended Fine's lectures will attest to her gifts for bringing text alive and making it relevant to modern Jewish life.

of the broader concept of *ervah* and its relation to how women are seen in Torah literature. It is the point of embarkation on a journey from a limit on male perceptions of women, especially during ritual practice, to a constant limit on female activities and norms.

Director of the Pardes Learning Seminar, Yoetzet Halacha, and a long-time student and teacher of women's roles within Judaism, Goldman Barash treats concepts in context to reveal unanticipated complexities. "I'm not apologetic for the texts and I refuse to ignore some of the complicated messages that come up through rabbinic attitudes toward women," said Goldman Barash in a podcast interview for Matan, where she also teaches contemporary halacha and Talmud.

She bridges genres of feminist academic discourse and traditional Orthodox voices. While she characterizes the former as "very critical, very scholarly, sometimes very angry, looking at the rabbinic world as somewhat misogynistic and unfair to women," the latter is "very apologetic," batting away critical voices with messages that we're "not really understanding those texts properly, they don't mean that, really Judaism loves women and values women, separate but equal." With its honest, careful approach to rabbinic scholarship and mores, *Uncovered* is a book emblematic of the rigorous study Pardes aims to cultivate within our students and teachers alike.



The Many Ways to Learn *at Pardes*

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