



Pardes Winter Learning Intensive
Power, Privilege and Responsibility
January 6-10, 2019

Class Descriptions

For faculty bios, visit www.pardes.org.il/faculty

MORNING TEXT INTENSIVES (pick one for all five mornings, Sunday-Thursday)
8:30 -11:30 am

Intro to Text Study (no Hebrew background needed)

This track option will be co-taught by two teachers:

Centers and Peripheries - On Measuring Social Responsibility (Rabbinics)

Leah Rosenthal - Sun/Tues/Thurs am

We will examine a particularly strange ritual presented in the book of Deuteronomy- the rite of the “broken necked heifer”. As we explore some traditional commentaries to this Biblical ritual found in the classical Rabbinic texts of the Mishnah and the Talmud, we will engage with ancient discussions of societal dysfunctionality and the proper response to conflict and violence within our communities.

How to Treat a Stranger - Passages with a Strong Message (Bible)

Howard Markose - Mon/Wed am

Our Torah teaches that we must not wrong strangers or oppress them, for we were strangers in the Land of Egypt. Based on that declaration, are there actions and attitudes that are for us to undertake (or avoid) when it comes to the stranger in our midst? This course, which meets twice, will explore how this mitzvah (commandment) is stated and understood in the Biblical text, as well as how we can apply its multi-dimensional message to our current challenging situation in which strangers wish to join our community.

Monarchy and the Ideal State

Bible: Intro level

Michael Hattin

Over the course of human history, many civilizations have dreamt of building an ideal state. Our tradition also preserves the record of such an attempt; it flourished for a brief moment

of time at the dawn of the First Temple period. We will consider its rise and fall through the life and times of its main protagonist, King Solomon.

Textually, our study will focus upon the beginning of the Book of Kings 1, Chapters 1 – 12 but we will ponder much other material as we investigate the matter of monarchy more closely. No office in ancient Israel held more power and none engendered more ambivalence. While monarchy is no longer a popular form of government in the Western world, the questions raised by monarchy are timely indeed: what is the right amount of power to grant our elected officials and how can we ensure that they wield that power wisely and justly?

Our studies will include close textual analysis, consideration of selected early Rabbinic sources and classical commentaries, as well as the inclusion of other relevant historical material.

Protesting at the Movies in Petah Tikva: Other People's Sins and the Challenges of Modern Liberalism

Rabbinic Texts: Intro level

Daniel Reifman

The verse *lifnei iver lo titein mikhshol* (“Do not place a stumbling-block before the blind”, Lev. 19:14), is interpreted by the rabbis to prohibit facilitating another person’s sin. But what is the limit of one person’s responsibility for another’s actions? For instance, is a store owner responsible for what a customer does with her purchase? (A wedding cake? A bottle of pills? A gun?) And of obvious relevance to contemporary Jewish society: how far must one Jew go to prevent another Jew from violating Shabbat? This was the issue under debate in 1984 when the Heikhal cinema in Petah Tikva began offering Friday-night screenings, and thousands of religiously observant Jews turned out to protest. As modern as these issues may be, there are surprising parallels in rabbinic literature, as the rabbis struggled to set appropriate boundaries in their interactions with both non-Jews and the less observant Jews of their time. We will trace the path of *lifnei iver* from the mishnah through contemporary responsa to see how the rabbis’ use of this concept sheds light on the challenges of modern liberal society.

Contesting the Status Quo - the Daughters of Tzelophchad

Bible: Intermediate/ Advanced level

Tovah Leah Nachmani

Orphaned and women, the daughters of Tzelophchad found themselves vulnerable when it was time to inherit the Land of Israel. Together, they challenged the power system and succeeded. What were the true motivations of the daughters of Tzelophchad in contesting the status quo?

To what extent was their agenda motivated by personal interest? What enabled their claims to be heard and even perpetuated for all generations? We will do an in-depth study in Hebrew of the verses related to the five women who stormed the establishment in power,

and explore how many traditional commentators, midrashim and later commentaries differ regarding their brazen initiative and its import for future generations.

I am Not Your Slave – I Only Work for You

Rabbinic Texts: Advanced level

Meir Schweiger

In the Torah, we are constantly reminded to recall our experience as slaves in Egypt, so that we do not become abusive when we are empowered; nevertheless, the Torah itself allows and proscribes for the institution of a Hebrew slave in a sovereign Jewish society. To reconcile this contradiction, we will study the Talmudic passages in Tractate Kiddushin that explore, in depth, the laws of a Hebrew slave, and we will examine the fine line to be drawn between a worker and a slave. As we analyze these ancient texts, we will see their relevance to our contemporary reality and ask ourselves a number of pointed questions: 1) how do we make sure that employees do not become enslaved in their jobs and to their jobs, and 2) what would constitute an “ideal” working environment.

Kollel - Upper Advanced (with prior approval)

This track option, for continuing Kollel students and participants with very strong Talmud/Halakha backgrounds, will be co-taught by two teachers:

Radical Rabbinic Thought: Reading Mishnah

Rahel Berkovits - Sun/Thurs am

The Mishnah was created and edited as one coherent body of work, which should be read as a whole, and not only broken into little bits interspersed between the pages of gemara text. It was not written for beginners or grade school children but rather as the basis of the Oral Law- the crown jewel of Tannaitic halakha, thought, and philosophy. What ideas emerge when one learns a chapter of Mishnah in-depth in its entirety?. In this class we will examine the literary and content structure of a number of different chapters in the Mishnah and try to unpack the meta-themes, ideas, and philosophy presented by the Rabbis. One may be surprised by the seemingly modern ideas surrounding human equality, gender equality, and human responsibility presented by the ancient Rabbis in the text of the Mishnah.

Shabbat - Realistic Workers' Freedom and Social Egalitarianism

Elisha Ancselovits - Tues am

Biblical Shabbat laws through detailed rabbinic discussions of Shabbat have been viewed as addressing a cultic matter (bein adam la-makom). In this class, we will evaluate primary sources from Tanakh, Qumran, Hazal, Rishonim, and Aharonim to see how the legal discussions about Shabbat address the creation of a weekly ethical day off from work - a day of personal and social rejuvenation. We will see that even the description of God in Shabbat is of a God who requires ethical conduct to the laborer. Moreover, for this special

class, we will also compare Christian gospel teachings about Jesus in order to reflect on the Jewish tradition of considering the maximum possible versus the destructive ideal.

MID-MORNING ELECTIVES: 11:45 am-12:45 pm, Monday/Wednesday
(pick one course for both days)

Rabbinic Power and Its Discontents

Gila Fine

Monday: The Danger of Rabbinic Transgression

What makes great leaders fall into sexual scandal? Can men and women learn Torah together? And why does a celebrated rabbi allow a congregant to spit in his face? Exploring the story of R. Meir's candle through the Mishna and Talmud, Maimonides and Menachem de Lonzano, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Rabbi X

Wednesday: The Tragedy of Rabbinic Rivalry

What are the three fatal flaws of a rabbi? Why does Torah study turn friends into enemies? And how does a great rosh yeshiva end up killing the best student he ever had? Exploring the tragedy of R. Yohanan and R. Kahana through the Midrash and Talmud, Somerset Maugham and José Saramago, Martin Buber and Adin Steinsaltz.

Levinas: The Ethics of Otherness

Zvi Hirschfield

How do we relate to the Other in a post-modern world? What are the obligations we have towards one another and what are they rooted in? We will explore Levinas' approach to ethics with an emphasis on how Jewish texts can be a source for these ideas and values.

Equality, Republican Government, Rights and Obligations: Biblical and Rabbinic Legacies

David Bernstein

Monday: Could It Be that Equality and Republican Government Have Their Roots in Biblical and Rabbinic Judaism?

We generally assume that as the Western world became less religious and more secular during the Enlightenment, the ideas of equality and republican government began to grow apace. We will question that assumption and look for the connections between Biblical and Rabbinic ideas and the growth of these modern notions.

Wednesday: Two Alternative Paths to the Creation of the Good Society: Rights and Obligations

While the discourse of modernity is about human rights, Judaism offers a different way to build a better world, through obligations. This can often create a disconnect between

moderns and Judaism as they are speaking in two different “languages.” We will examine the differences between these two variant approaches.

Developing Sacred Chutzpah – When the queer voice challenges the status quo power construct

Yiscah Smith

Monday: Lekh Lekha

This session is based on the verse in Bereishit – Genesis - 12:1: “God said to Avram, ‘Go to yourself, away from your land, from your birthplace and from your father’s house, to the land that I will show you.’” This verse demands that we heed the still small voice within -_Even if it’s queer!. It introduces to us the spiritual practice of Lekh Lekha --- moving away from one sense of self --- the finite self – the ego based self – the limited self, towards another sense of self --- the infinite self – the beyond ego self – the limitless self. But why would a person move away from the familiar to an unfamiliar and unknown destination?

Wednesday: Sacred or Holy Audacity/Brazeness/Chutzpah

"But My servant Calev, because a different spirit was with him and he followed Me wholeheartedly, I shall bring him to the Land to which he came, and his offspring shall possess it." Numbers 14:24

There is something deep-rooted, a fundamental matter, that without it, one’s spiritual journey – the entirety of a life journey in general – is not able to succeed. This session explores amazing texts that discuss cultivating self confidence and trusting in one’s self. The practice of developing a "different spirit" that challenges the status quo power construct, especially when the status quo disapproves.

AFTERNOON CLASSES: CONTEMPORARY APPLICATIONS

Sunday and Monday 2:30-3:15

Student Voices (several options will be offered each day; no pre-registration required)

A serious conversation about Power, Privilege and Authority needs multiple voices. In addition to dialogue with Torah and faculty, students will have the opportunity to learn from one another.

Sunday 3:30-5:00 / Tues 2:30-5:00 (choose one class for both days):

Religion and the Modern State of Israel

Zvi Hirschfield

Together we will explore the tensions that exist in the very idea of a Jewish and democratic state. We will define the origins of Rabbinic/Halakhic authority in Israel today, and think about the advantages and disadvantages present in the current system. We will also

examine how the role of religion in Israel may be impacting the relationship between Israel and diaspora Jewish communities.

Mahloket Matters! Can we disagree constructively about authority privilege and responsibility?

Daniel Roth

Sunday: Xenophobia or National Security? From Pharaoh and WWII to Today

When is fearing minorities xenophobia, and when is it a question of national security? This question will be explored through a text study of Pharaoh's speech about the Israelite minority (in this week's parsha!), historical case studies from WWII and a practical exercise designed to help us disagree more constructively on this issue today.

Tuesday: Coexist or Separate?

From Isaac and Ishmael to Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Muslims Today

When can we coexist with "the other," and when do we need to separate to protect "our own"? This question will be explored through both classical Jewish and Islamic readings of the story detailing the expulsion of Ishmael from the Abrahamic family, and their implications for the relationship between Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Muslims today.

Power and Film: *Gett (2014)* / *Barriers (2011)*

Meesh Hammer-Kossoy

Film has the incontrovertible power to expose raw nerves. When two award-winning films about power and privilege dialogue with traditional Jewish texts, what responsibility do we as viewers have afterwards?

Sunday: *Gett (2014)* An Israeli woman (Ronit Elkabetz) fights for three years to obtain a divorce from her devout husband (Simon Abkarian), who refuses to grant his permission to dissolve the marriage. (We will only have time for part of the film.)

Golden Globe Award for Best Foreign Language Film, Ophir Award for Best Film, Ophir Award for Best Supporting Actor

Tuesday: *Barriers (2011)* Uri, a young officer, together with two soldiers under his command, is manning a checkpoint. Two women from the "Watch" organization are filming events at the checkpoint. Uri receives an order to close the checkpoint because of a bomb threat, and tension rises as an ambulance carrying a sick child arrives from a Palestinian village. Uri's choices will either save or sacrifice people's lives.

First Prize for Live-Action Shorts - Santa Barbara International Film Festival 2013

First Prize for Short Drama - Jerusalem Film Festival 2011

Best Film Intercultural Dialogue - International Munich Film Festival

Power in Education (Mandatory for PCJE students, Open to All)

Pardes Center for Jewish Educators Faculty + Visiting Faculty

Within educational communities such as day schools or camps, we often talk about ensuring that learners are treated equally, without discrimination based on family background, income, or how they practice Judaism. What sometimes is overlooked is fairness. The difference between the two is that equality is about sameness regardless of circumstance, while fairness is about each getting what he or she needs. Specifically, diverse learners often have different needs than their peers. In these two sessions we will look at why the situation is how it is, study Jewish texts that explore fairness as opposed to equality, and consider how, as educators, we can utilize supports, enrichments, alternative activities, and assessments that allow for each learner to be challenged at their level with appropriate curricular/pedagogical access.

Monday 3:30-5:00 / Wednesday 2:30-5:00 (choose one class for both days):

Zionism: Embracing Power, Struggling With Privilege

Mike Feuer

The rebirth of Jewish national aspirations in the 19th century was bound up with new models of relationship to both power and privilege. In these two classes we will examine both the writings and the historical context of early Zionism. Our goal is to explore the tension between minority and majority culture, the rising importance of military power for national identity and many other issues which continue to divide Israeli and Diaspora Jewry today.

#We Too: How We Perpetuate Abuse in the Jewish Community

Judy Klitsner

Despite our hopes that the Jewish community would rise above the problems associated with the "Me Too" movement, sadly, in this regard, we are unexceptional. In this session, we will analyze the biblical characters Judah and King David, noting patterns of abuse among leaders and their communities that recur until this day. We will then look to biblical models for breaking these unfortunate patterns.

Historic Powerlessness as a Call to Responsibility: The Refugee Crisis in Theory and Practice, with a trip to South Tel Aviv

Meesh Hammer-Kossoy / Karen Feuer / Jean-Marc Liling (former Executive Director of Center for International Migration and Integration)

Monday: Tradition repeats the call to dismantle privilege: "You shall love the stranger for you were strangers in Egypt." Israel is home to approximately 40,000 African Refugees, mostly from Sudan and Eritrea. The government is pushing to deport them, even by force, portraying them as a threat to a struggling Jewish State. Others see taking care of these

refugees as a manifestation of our national identity. And the crisis is global. What can Jewish tradition contribute?

Wednesday, 2:00-7:15*: Trip to South Tel Aviv, where most of the Asylum seekers live. We'll witness the complexity of their lives and its interaction with the Zionist dream, as well as hear the stories of asylum seekers themselves.

East and West in the Land of Israel: Challenges and the Expectation of Love

Drori Yehoshua

Monday:

Drori Yehoshua will address some of the challenges of Ashke-normativity (i.e. the prevalent privileging of Ashkenazi customs and mindsets) through a lens of traditional text. Drori grew up in Nachlaot in a Kurdi family and has been a leader at Mimizrach Shemesh, an organization dedicated to the values of communal responsibility and social action rooted in all Jewish traditions including those of the Sephardi and Mizrachi heritage. He currently teaches at the Hartman Institute.

Wednesday:

2:00-7:15: Join Meesh, Karen and Jean Marc in exploring the African Asylum seekers crisis in South Tel Aviv (see above).

EVENING CLASSES:

Sunday & Tuesday nights, 5:15-7:00 pm

Democratization of Mystical Experience: The Hasidic Dream and Disappointment

Levi Cooper

While the Besht (Ba'al Shem Tov) bequeathed a rich and inspiring spiritual legacy, a solitary authentic letter from his pen has survived. We will dedicate two classes to studying this important historic document, probing the vision of making mystical experience a possibility for all, and considering whether this might be a paradigm for dismantling privilege.

Monday evening 5:15 - 7:00 pm

Authenticity, Queerness and the Responsibility of Self Empowerment

Yiscah Smith

People are always bemoaning what seems to them to be their lack of freedom of choice. But know that for every choice that emerges from an individual, there must be an

individuated self to choose. There must be a person who can stand by oneself, who can decide what s/he wants and needs for him/herself.” How do you know though if it is the authentic YOU, the autonomous YOU, and the genuine YOU who is making your decisions? How do you become that person? A teaching from Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, the Piaseczna Rebbe, The Aish Kodesh. (1889-1943). After exploring this text, Yiscah will share her own story about her journey to authenticity, discussing her joys and struggles with her own spirituality, gender identity, and commitment to living true to herself.

Monday evening, 7:00-9:30

7:00-7:30 - Night Seder Dinner

To sign up (by 5 pm Sunday) for a very light and simple dinner before Night Seder--write your name and pay 10 shekels in the big jar near the photocopy machine at the entrance to Pardes.

7:30-9:30 pm - Night Seder

Night Seder provides a unique opportunity for students to use the resources of the Beit Midrash at their own pace, outside the regular hours, in a relaxed atmosphere - alone, in havruta pairs, or in small groups.

Tuesday evening 5:15-7:15 pm

Thinking Like a Talmudic Sage: Nidda - Limiting Patriarchal Power Intelligently

Elisha Ancselovits

If Halakhic norms are traditions on how to realistically address the complexities of the human condition, the venerable norms guiding a couple's sexual and home-economics behavior during menstruation and throughout the month are especially important. They both consciously expose and try to address intelligently -- that is to say realistically -- tensions that result from the competing wants of two people in a relationship, from the power difference between men and women, and even from the power differential between men themselves and women themselves. We will study the insights of traditional Halakhic sources in order to reflect on the contemporary applications of these insights for a reality in which women have more power and in which lifestyle choices are more varied.

Wednesday Evening: 7:30 pm

The Sidney and Miriam Brettler Memorial Series on Israel & the Diaspora in Antiquity: Partnership, Dialogue, or Debate?

Jewish Dispersion: Punishment, Blessing or Universal Mission (inaugural lecture)

Isaiah Gafni

Participants registered for the Power, Privilege and Responsibility Winter Learning Intensive can attend free of charge.