

# HAVRUTA

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A  
PARDES  
LEARNING  
COMPANION

## Is PARDES Moving to the Right?

by Levi Lauer

For the past few years, a small but growing number of Bonei Pardes have written, or spoken with me, about their concern that Pardes is taking a turn to the "right," to ideological positions increasingly authoritarian and less accommodating to Jewish pluralism. Trying with only limited success not to react defensively (I regard Pardes' reputation for tolerance and openness to diversity a precious legacy to be preserved and protected, by its faculty, and above all by its director), I have asked



those former students to cite specific examples of our change of direction.

While in some instances such examples are not forthcoming ("It's just a feeling I have," "I've heard this from students who learned at Pardes after I did," "The influence of the more 'liberal faculty' is

waning"), usually some of the following are mentioned.

(1) Pardes no longer allows egalitarian or women's *minyanim* to *daven* in its building. (2) The newer faculty have adopted positions incompatible with an appreciation of the legitimacy of non-halachic commitments. (3) The diversity of the faculty is insufficient to encourage students to develop their own perspectives and to have those understandings accorded even a hard-won legitimation. Let us examine these one at a time.

(1) Pardes does indeed, as always, give use of its rooms and *sifrei Torah* to groups of students who organize *tefila* in ways at variance with halachic requirements. There have been a few years when such *minyanim* (prayer groups) have counted men and women in

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**COMMENT** | One thing that never seems to change is how much anguish students experience in trying to decide what they should do after Pardes, and where they should do it. Should they stay another year, two years, a lifetime? Should they return to their home countries for a few years? for good? Should they earn a graduate degree and then come back, or should they first go into the army here and then do graduate work?

The common denominator in all of these questions is, of course, Israel and the fascination it holds for those whose Jewish sensibilities have become more finely tuned. Both from my own experience as a student at Pardes ('80-'81) and from my observations since, it is rare to find someone whose Zionist perspective while at Pardes was not enhanced, challenged or changed as a result of living and learning in Israel. Somewhere along the way, it becomes inevitable for students to start asking, could I, and would I want to, live in Israel. There is no single answer, and for each person the process of decision-making must follow its own course. Living with uncertainty, creative as it may be, is

never easy. And living with it at a time when one is also questioning certain basic life values produces a considerable amount of serious thinking, talking and tension.

In PARDES PEOPLE we are able to glimpse this tension and attempts to resolve it. The five students interviewed here take us through the different stages of their decision-making. Henny, though wanting to be in Israel, will be going back to Holland where she feels most needed. Phil is going back to the States for the time being. Adam is staying on at Pardes for one more year. Cindy is planning to return here after she gets a doctoral degree in America. And Karen is staying on and making *aliya*.

More generally, decision-making is indeed the theme of this issue of *Havruta*. In Levi's article "Is Pardes Moving to the Right?" he reiterates loudly and clearly that Pardes by conscious design remains a sanctuary of non-coercive Jewish thinking and practice. Students wanting a *yeshiva* that imposes a single perspective will be disappointed here. Diversity, and a willingness to live with the tension pro-

duced by that diversity, continue to characterize Pardes. So making up one's mind as to how and why one wishes to live Jewishly is still a matter of conscience and understanding.

The feature article in PARDES REVISITED is "Head Covering for Women," a choice of subject dictated by interest in the issue, my own and others, that has been voiced over the years. Shmuel Gordon's examination of sources on this topic is meant to be informative, not prescriptive. That the decision to cover or uncover one's hair is often emotionally charged, evoking strong reactions from both participants and observers, seems clear. It is to be hoped therefore that this article will help to inform our opinions. And finally, we come to Anya, a young Russian woman whom Yedidya met on his trip to the Soviet Union. Who can fail to be touched by what is probably the most momentous decision of all in this entire issue, her decision to join her fate to that of other refuseniks and seek a home in Israel.

Jane Kimchi



their quorum. There have been many years, including the current one, when women's *minyanim* have davened regularly at Pardes.

(2) The faculty added in the past five years have provided our students with diverse models of lifestyle and halachic commitment. They have further demonstrated a greater receptivity than their predecessors to secular disciplines and to the grounding of their halachic understanding in sources not usually identified with Orthodox thought. This dynamic is keenly felt by some of our students who urge that increased place be made for more mainstream Orthodox perspectives which would be less accommodating of most students' halachic inconsistencies and ambivalencies.

While all of Pardes' teachers are *shomrei mitzvot*, the variations in their intensity and consistency (*hakpada*) of observance are conducive to students' critical evaluation of the *halacha's* structures and demands.

(3) Most of our students, including the least traditionally inclined, look to Pardes to provide consistent parameters of ritual and ethical practice against which they can measure their own standards of behavior. This accounts for the continuing presence of Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist rabbinic students who find their education and personal development well served by this consistency and by the respect Pardes accords their own positions. Pardes remains unambiguously receptive to multiple models of religious integrity while passionately debating the Jewish *authenticity* of those models. Such debate, not coincidentally, is as commonplace at faculty meetings as in the classroom and stands at the very foundation of a good religious education.

As always, there are students at Pardes today who wear *kipot* and those who do not, students who are *shomrei Shabbat* and those who are not, students who accept halachic authority in its entirety and those who deny its divine origin or its prior claim to any authority for their lives. Pardes will always accept all these students, ideological bent never being a condition for acceptance.

While hoping explicitly and frankly that our students will intensify their commitment to halachic structure, we do so without making that commitment a condition for the respect and integrity accorded each and every student who learns with good ability and seriousness of purpose.

Given all this, from where does the perception derive that Pardes is losing its soul to the "right"?

First, there is a failure to note that the students of the eighties are usually far less politically active and far more respectful and accepting of authority

than their counterparts of the seventies and sixties. Today's student inclines to pursue religious search from a context of *na'aseh venishma*, (we shall experience as, or even before, we learn). S/he is willing to participate ritually and experientially without making philosophical judgment about that participation. This functional, but not theoretical, temporary suspension of critical disbelief produces an intellectual and spiritual environment different from the one characterized by contentious scrutiny and debate in previous decades. The imperceptive observer could mistake those softer tones as reflecting a more authoritarian orientation.



Second, Bonei Pardes tend to romanticize the nature of their own experience at Pardes as having been "specially and uniquely" responsive to their particular needs. There have always been more and less open faculty, and more or less severe challenges to a student's halachic inconsistencies and reservations. Yet almost everyone leaves Pardes with very positive feelings of acceptance, their identities strengthened and enhanced.

Third, students leaving Pardes often find themselves at a critical juncture in their religious life, highly sensitive to the places where the seams of their theology and practice are loosely stitched. This makes them appropriately vulnerable to even small ideological differentiation. Thus what may seem to be a shift of major proportion at Pardes is really of much smaller dimension and consequence.

This tendency is exacerbated by the difficulty encountered by many former students in finding a sustaining environment in North American and European Jewish communities. At Pardes they found a highly personalized meeting ground for Jews of diverse affiliations, a *beit midrash* that espoused intensity and tolerance, devotion and humility. Emerging from that *beit midrash* with new understandings of religious self, many find themselves at odds with the tenor of

organized Jewish life. Synagogues are too large and devoid of intensity and personal searching. Those who are better educated Jewishly are too often narrowly parochial and intolerant; tolerance is too often the province of the poorly educated.

Disappointment and frustration rise while Pardes remains a model for their Jewish life. The harder it is to find a comfortable environment, the more their learning and experience at Pardes is idealized. Is it a surprise, then, that our faults and failings are magnified as a consequence of that understandable and inevitably exaggerated idealization?

Fourth, the impact of Jerusalem on our students' learning is very strong. As time passes, it is easy to perceive Pardes, Jerusalem and Israel as one, and when hearing of a move to the "right" in the sectors of Israel politics and religion, project that move onto Pardes.

It is good that the reality is otherwise. We have worked hard to remove Pardes' learning beyond the reach of internecine political and religious strife. The walls of our *beit midrash* present a solid barrier against the tides of intolerance and denominational acrimony. Pardes continues to be devoted to an understanding that the most important changes our students will make will come from the inside out, and will be as unpredictable and varied as are their backgrounds, personalities, needs and values. These will be the changes that will come from careful introspection and learning, not from a hurried rush to meet anyone else's expectations. These are the changes that lead neither "right" nor "left" but to a steadied center of profound and compelling thought, belief and deed. From such slowly evolving change there will emerge added wisdom, courage, and human decency that will be the finest achievement of our students and teachers and Pardes' best contribution to the well-being of *Am Yisrael*. ■

## MISSING PERSONS

Sometimes people move and forget to inform us. If you know the whereabouts of any of the following Bonei Pardes, please get in touch with us.

Barbie Engelman	Ruth Polak
Bob Feinberg	Caroline Rody
Susan Fielding	Gerald Rottman
Elyse M. Goldstein	Shelley Schiffren
Yael Lambert	Baruch Smith
Barbara Levine	Jeffrey Allen Sokoloff
Morten Margolinsky	Sandi Wexelberg



## PARDES PEOPLE: DECIDING ABOUT LIFE AFTER PARDES

ADAM RUBIN '87-'88

*Southern California; B.A. European and American History, University of California Berkeley, 1987.*

Like most American Jews, I "graduated" from Judaism after my *bar mitzva* and did practically nothing Jewish until becoming a counselor at a Reform camp the summer before my junior year at college. Coming from Orange County which is not very Jewish and going to university in Berkeley where attachment to a particular religion or ethnic group was viewed as provincial, I found working as a counselor at camp to be my first real encounter with people committed to this form of particularism. There for the first time I met Americans who had been to Israel and were committed to Judaism. There was a lot of talk about Israel in poetic and romantic terms and this made me feel I had to see it for myself. So I decided to come for a semester through a program offered by the Reform movement. It involved living with an Israeli family while studying at Hebrew University and working on kibbutz. I stayed on for the summer as a counselor for a teenage tour group.

At this point in my intellectual development I was finding study of European and American history extremely disillusioning. I remember two classes — one on Black history after the Civil War and one on European history during the two world wars — and how disgusted I felt when I learned of the depths to which human behavior had descended. It was at that time that someone lent me Heschel's *The Sabbath*, and I must have been ready for it. It was stunningly beautiful and served as an introduction to my renewed interest in Judaism and as a stark contrast to what I was studying in university. When I came to Israel, however, I lived with a completely secular family — no *kiddush*, no "*Shabbat shalom*," no connection with the past. The ethical structure and sense of community that I have found so compelling during this past year at Pardes were missing.

During the following summer I met someone who had spent two years at Pardes. He gave me the literature on Pardes and it struck a chord. Pardes appealed to me because I felt I was always reading about Judaism and hearing about the wisdom of Judaism but never living it. Pardes was a place where I could do both. I decided to come when I finished college.



I remember I couldn't get over my first bus ride here, seeing all the *kipot*, knowing the bus driver was Jewish, the policeman on the corner, the person working in the shoe store, seeing all the signs in Hebrew. In Los Angeles there are Jewish professionals, but I never ran across a Jewish military officer. I thought it was astonishing to see Jews carrying weapons to defend themselves in a Jewish state.

Every aspect of life that our religion addresses one faces here. You can lead a Jewish life in the States in a Jewish neighborhood but without the sense of being part of a total Jewish society. In the sheltered environment of the States one doesn't have to confront the moral issues one does here. You don't have to be a policeman, or walk around Southern Lebanon or Ramallah with stones thrown at you. It seems to me that in Israel you have to deal with doing the dirty work of society that in the States is left to others, whether policing a hostile Arab village, running the government, serving three years in the army, doing reserve duty at least one month out of every year, or selling weapons to governments less than ethically palatable. If I decide to live here it would be because I feel that living in a complex full Jewish society is the only way to experience the full spectrum of Jewish life on a day-to-day basis.

Right now I'm considering coming back for another year of study. I feel

that the first year has served as an incredibly effective introduction to the tradition. I now have the taste and the basic tools but I need to use and develop them. I feel if I leave now that neither my skills nor my internalized philosophical grounding are at a point where I can go back to the States and continue independently. I want to be able to pick up a text, find a *havruta* (study partner) and get through the Hebrew and the Rashi script. Also, I wouldn't be going back to a community where I could live Jewishly. I feel I don't yet have the commitment to carry on on my own in a clearly non-Jewish atmosphere — davening daily, wearing a *kipa*, keeping Shabbat and *kashrut*, let alone creating a learning environment.

Why is this so important to me? I feel learning a text, davening from a *siddur* and keeping Shabbat provide me with three things: an ethical framework, a sense of community and an extremely compelling tie to a past that I had largely ignored. In Orange County you had to be a 100% American. In Berkeley you had to be a citizen of the world. At Pardes I found I'm allowed to be a Jew. All of this has become a basic part of who I am.

So what are the costs of staying here, financially and emotionally? I'm hesitant about continuing to cut myself off from family relationships. I also have a pragmatic American suspicion of sitting in a room for two years and avoiding what some people term "reality" even though I know that what is real and productive is open to debate. Yet I feel learning has tremendous value for its own sake and for its practical benefits which affect how I look at the world and treat other people.

Why then not go back and study in a *yeshiva* in the States? There seems to be something obviously right about studying Judaism in the Jewish state. When you study *teruma* (tithing), you can go to a kibbutz and see it done. When you study about the sanctity of life and experience the terrible and universal sense of loss when a soldier is killed in battle or a victim by a terrorist, you feel that what you are learning and what you are doing are inextricably bound. In Des Moines, Iowa you don't hear "*Shabbat shalom*."

At this point I feel I want to live in Israel. I believe I belong here and have an obligation. I can't believe there are guys my age and younger walking around Southern Lebanon and I can just come and go. I remember speaking to a



group of officers and how powerfully it affected me realizing that they're doing it all for me, not just carrying guns, but leaving their families several times a year and paying 60% income tax so I can have the luxury to come and go. But I have no money, no practical skills, just a B.A. in European history. My dream in the States was to teach history in college. Practically that's not possible here. It would be infinitely easier to go home, go to graduate school, pursue my profession, get married and then when I'm 33 come back here. I've thought about staying here and taking up a manual trade, but I don't know if I'm willing to give up my career aspirations and simply "make a living." First things first. Right now I'm working on staying another year at Pardes. •



CINDY WIENER/SOBEL '86-'88

*Williston Park, Long Island; B.S. Occupational Therapy, Tufts University, 1982.*

When I first came to Israel at the end of 1984, I went to kibbutz ulpan and also began working in occupational therapy (O.T.) on kibbutz. The next year I joined the staff at Hadassah Hospital on Mt. Scopus in pediatric O.T.

I came to Israel because I got tired of standing in *shul* every year during the High Holidays and saying next year we should all be in Jerusalem and never coming (I had been here once in 1978 for

two weeks when I was 18). I've always carried with me a longing to connect more deeply and strongly with Judaism and a feeling that this had something to do with being in Israel. In the States I had a sense of being a random duplicate but felt that if I came here I could carve out a niche, whether in kibbutz, development town or even the city.

It's not that I didn't think I would be successful in America. In fact I was on a fast track to becoming a yuppie. I looked forward to graduate school, a car, a house and a comfortable life, but Jewishly I felt I was living in a tremendous vacuum. I called it the "so what" feeling. You can do all these things but so what.

My decision to come to Pardes had a lot to do with a need to satisfy a yearning to find my place Jewishly. I grew up as a Reform Jew, but I always knew I wanted to go deeper into Judaism. I didn't even know what *Humash* was or what it meant to be *shomer Shabbat*. Therefore, when I came to Israel, I was truly at a loss to understand what made the seemingly huge faction of religious Jews in Israel — by which I mean both the ultra-nationalists and the *haredi* (ultra-Orthodox) — so aggressive about their Jewishness? How could Jews throw stones at other Jews because of a notion of what God wants of them? What makes them think and act like that? What does it mean to be observant? I couldn't find answers to these questions just by living in Israel. I wanted a place and a space to ask questions and clarify for myself where I stand as a Jew and where I could push myself in my belief. Then I heard about Pardes through a former student.

I've found that I've done a lot of clarifying of my Judaism not just in the hours spent at Pardes but also through community activity outside of Pardes, such as in my work, in being active in the *shul* I attend, in arguing politics, in writing letters to friends and in receiving guests from America and showing them Israel. What I've gleaned from all of this is how important it is to develop one's Jewish identity (no matter what form it takes) and also how profoundly interrelated Israel and Judaism are.

By the time I returned to Pardes for the second year, I realized that I actually wanted to live in Israel. The things I value and the great majority of the people I respect are here. They could all be in America now doing much better materially, yet they've chosen another direction, namely to develop themselves professionally and Jewishly in Israel.

Despite the fact that I would like to remain here now, I realize that if I want to be able to affect the system, I need to

go back to the States for an interim period and obtain a doctorate in O.T. With this I would hope not only to become a very good therapist but also to be able to improve the health care system in Israel. For example, we're bombarded here with the message that it is a primary concern to promote family life and care for the sick, yet certain basic needs are not being provided. Mothers with baby carriages and strollers and the disabled have neither grading at the curbs, nor accessibility to most public places. Furthermore whatever information is available is sparse and often inaccurate. These are some of the things I would like to change. I would also like to help the mostly female O.T.s who settle for low salaries and overly-taxing work to upgrade their profession. There are no courses available here in the allied health professions, so one of the things I would hope to do is to teach.

I've begun to think that perhaps nothing happens by coincidence. Surrounded at Pardes with positive examples of the centrality of good Jewish family life, I began to feel after a long process that it was right for me. This year I met Yuval, my husband, who is also a student. We actually met in a neighborhood *minyán* and our paths kept crossing at Pardes.

After endless talks about Israel, money and our professional lives (he is a defense attorney), we realized that both of us had decided, independent of each other, that we wanted to return to the States temporarily to work and save money, and I in order to continue my education. Our plan at the present is to remain away no longer than six years.

I know that we could both stay here permanently now, find a niche in a development town where we could dig in and tough it out. But I have a large financial obligation to take care of that weighs on me and I also want a nest egg.

Also, Yuval would like to do international law and needs experience in that field before he comes here to work. So our decision to return to the States at the end of another year here is due to a combination of both practical and idealistic considerations. We both view ourselves as fortunate to have been in Israel and at Pardes. We had such a powerful Jewish experience that we should be able to go back to whatever Jewish community in America we will live in and be effective, sharing what we have, whether organizing Bonei Pardes or stimulating and challenging others.

I would not be telling the truth if I said I had no fear of the dream diminishing, but at this point it is very much part of our reality. We don't have complicated theories about why we feel



certain at this time that we will return, just that it is central and meaningful to us. We're the type of people who can't take things for granted, and since living here means constantly redefining oneself, we tend to feel very much at home. I think you have to have faith that this is what you want to do. Furthermore, staying another year here before going back should provide a more solid basis for our marriage and for our lives together as a Jewish couple. We'll both continue to learn and also to work in our professions in Israel this coming year.

I remember a Pardes student saying that the real challenge of being a Jew is not how well you can study a Mishna inside the nice safe world of Pardes, but how you live your life and what you do out there in the "real world." This helped me realize that I really have only one life, and that the "real world" for me can only mean Israel. •

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#### KAREN MORRITT '87-'88

*Newfield, New York; Brown University (two years), Empire State College, Judaic Studies/Visual Arts (in progress).*

My decision to spend another year at Pardes took place at a distinct point during this past year, whereas the desire to make *aliya* developed gently and gradually from the moment of my arrival in Israel. Being at Pardes has meant both learning Torah as well as constant interaction with a group of morally sensitive and self-motivated individuals. This year-long exposure has both strengthened my connection to Jewish community and enabled me to clarify my individual goals. These take palpable form in my desire to make *aliya* and thus enter into the collective existence of Jews in *Eretz Yisrael*, and in plans to continue learning. I hope to integrate my understanding of human creative capacity (specifically in the visual arts) with Torah.

I grew up in a small rural town with few Jews and received no formal Jewish education. I realize now that my ethical values derived from the example of my mother who in her profession as a social worker has devoted herself to helping children with family problems. I first became interested specifically in Judaism in high school and hoped to pursue this interest in college. My stepfather's death in my senior year stimulated my philosophical questioning. It also created a very close bond between me and my mother and brother. An emphasis on home and family is something I later

heard echoed in traditional Judaism and trusted.

My first sustained involvement with a Jewish community occurred with the Orthodox *minyan* at Brown University. From the outside looking in, traditional Orthodox Judaism appealed to me because it seemed the most authentic. Also I was plainly curious. Orthodoxy's apparent strangeness fascinated me and presented a challenge. When I began davening I didn't yet know the *aleph-bet*, and several very patient women led me through the *siddur* each Shabbat.

I felt at home in the Orthodox *minyan* both because the students were warm and welcoming and because I respected the fact that their actions as halachic Jews reflected their values. I was also particularly struck by the hospitality of the Providence Jewish community which opened its arms to us and included students at family meals on every Shabbat and holiday occasion. I began saying *kaddish* for my step-father that year. This process of daily prayer heightened my awareness of God's immediacy in my life. I began to realize that the teaching of Torah is part of a dialogue and to comprehend its meaning I had to begin learning what it said.

I heard about Pardes from several sources and planned to spend one year there and then return to the States and transfer to another university with a stronger Jewish studies program. Once I came to the realization that going to Israel to study was the most appropriate way to further the path I had chosen and had convinced my family that it was right for me, I found it hard to visualize Israel in concrete every-day terms. It was only when I was actually living and learning in Israel that I began to develop a deep connection to the place, the manner of living and the people.

From the first I was so absorbed in learning at Pardes that the days might have sped by without my thinking of anything else. However it was necessary to consider completion of my undergraduate degree. I searched for American universities with textually oriented Judaic studies departments, yet as I examined their brochures in the stillness of my room in Jerusalem I felt I could not return to the social climate they offered. I also considered religious colleges in New York where I might continue learning Torah.

I had been writing home regularly, sharing my discoveries in Israel about even such aspects as the commitment and intensity which develop when studying in *havruta* (with a study partner). My mother must have understood my satisfaction with Pardes because she actually wrote to suggest that I spend a second year here. I was

incredulous, and very happy. Her support largely erased my only serious concern of the year, that my choices might alienate my family.

To continue at Pardes for a second year filled my need for extended Torah study but only deferred the issue of a college degree. By this time, as a natural progression of my religious and communal ideals, I had an inner assumption that at some undefined point in the future I would be making *aliya*. I spent many winter months agonizing over the ramifications of foregoing an Ivy League degree and the intellectual satisfaction it offers. However when I tried to visualize eventually returning to the States for my last two years' degree work, I found I was less attracted to the prospect of college in the States than to living my life fully as a Jew in Israel.



Then I learned about the Empire State College Program in Jerusalem which enables Americans to finish undergraduate degrees. A branch of the State University of New York, the program has an open-campus system which encourages self-motivated study and offers credit for equivalent college-level work. Given my two years of American university and one year at Pardes, I am able to complete my degree with only one additional year of study.

More importantly, the program enables me to integrate two important aspects of my life — a love of Torah study and my sensibilities as an artist. The latter had been in abeyance this past year while I was immersed in the study of Torah as text and word. Then one day I saw the paintings of a friend who has learned and painted in Jerusalem,



and I was struck by the carestaking devotion of the artist. I also realized how much I missed the physical pressure of a brush in my hand and the odor of turpentine. I have always drawn and painted, but certain that I could later resume art on my own, I had chosen a liberal arts education over fine arts school. Now I found myself wanting to understand how the thinking and feeling of an artist relates to the perspective offered by Torah. I plan to concentrate for my degree on visual art as a form of Midrash, as explanation and commentary on Torah.

Since taking this direction, I have received endless encouragement from staff and friends at Pardes, who perhaps see Torah as a canopy beneath which all human potential resides. There are important similarities between the internal experience of drawing which requires close visual scrutiny, the careful textual analysis in Torah study, and the painstaking self-analysis required to better one's character. Something akin to this idea arises in a work (*Kuntres Hahitbonenut*) by Rabbi Dov Baer of Lubavitch (1774-1824). He explains that an idea has breadth, length and depth much as a physical river does. He continues:

[wisdom] lingers on an idea and concentrates on it deeply, hesitating and not hurrying on...this is like gazing at something with one's eye. One does not merely glance at the object, but makes use of his powers of perception, so that it will make a lasting impression. He spends much time looking at it, until he knows it well, with its innermost details and most intrinsic essence... (translation of Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan). •

## HENNY VAN HET HOOFD '87-'88

*Rotterdam, the Netherlands; M.A. Medieval Hebrew and Jewish History, University of Leiden, 1985.*

Holland is only a 3 1/2 — 4 hour flight from here, so like most Dutch Jews, I've come to Israel many times. The first was when I graduated from high school; this is the ninth time and the longest.

In Holland I have always lived in small Jewish communities which had limited resources for Jewish study. Amsterdam, with a Jewish population of about 15,000 is the exception, but I never lived there. When I finished high school I thought of coming to Israel to live, but it was too big a step at that time. I chose instead to go to the University of Leiden where I knew I could get a good background in Hebrew. I was disappointed at first that almost none of the teachers or students in my department were Jewish.

As soon as I arrived in Leiden, the Jewish community made me feel very much at home. The more I became involved with them, the more I felt that there was a lot that could be done for them. They have a synagogue used at that time only for High Holidays and *seders*. There is no rabbi there or anyone who can *daven* or teach. One of the first things I did was join the university's Jewish student club, of which I eventually became president. As I began to talk with other Jewish students we discovered we all felt that we wanted to change the situation in the community. Most of the other Jewish students there also came from small places and were interested in learning more about Judaism and organizing more Jewish happenings.

Then a new rabbi came to the nearby community of the Hague. He was young

and enthusiastic and believed it possible to do something. We put a notice in the University papers and in the community to see if people were interested in Jewish studies. Among the responses we received were about 40 from previously unaffiliated Jewish students. We then found outside teachers, including the rabbi, and set up a number of courses — Hebrew (which I taught), Jewish history, Yiddish, Judaism and Gemara, so each evening there was something else to do. We had essentially founded a center for Jewish studies in Leiden. We also developed a Jewish studies house where students could live and meet and of which I was caretaker. With that house as a base we organized an occasional *seuda* for *erev Shabbat* and kosher meals once every other week. From this we expanded gradually. I worked both with Jewish students and with members of the Jewish community, both of whom participated in our various activities. I knew by this time that I wanted to work in the Jewish community when I finished my studies.

After graduation I got a job with the Jewish community of the Hague and also worked for the Jewish Museum in Amsterdam while continuing to live in Leiden. But this whole time I felt my knowledge was far from complete. Since I had exhausted the possibilities of going on with my learning in Holland, I decided to take time out and dedicate at least a year to studying in Israel. That's when I made the decision to come to Pardes which I had first heard about from a friend. The Jewish communities of Leiden and the Hague gave me financial help to enable me to come for one year.

During this year at Pardes, however, I began to realize that if I were going to make a substantial contribution to organizing Jewish education in Holland I would need more professional training. Then I heard about the Senior Educators' Program for Jewish Education in the Diaspora at the Melton Centre of the Hebrew University. I didn't expect to be accepted, but I was. Because it is designed to promote education in the diaspora, I knew that my acceptance meant that at least in the immediate future I would be returning to Holland.

The question of remaining in Holland or coming here is not an easy one. On the one hand, I feel I really belong in Israel where it is so much easier and so much more normal to be Jewish. Any time something happens in Israel, I feel guilty if I'm not here. On the other hand, I want to work as a Jewish educator where I am most needed. And I have no doubt that the need is greater in Holland especially for one who grew up there and can speak the language.





My plan at present is to do the Hebrew University program which takes one year and then go back for at least a few years to work in Holland helping set up a system of Jewish education. As a result of my past involvement, I've seen Jewish students crop up out of nowhere and Jewish learning take root where formerly there was nothing, so I feel I can have an impact. Holland is a country where a lot of people want to learn and are especially enthusiastic when they find someone qualified to help them. You don't first have to convince them. The problem in both the Orthodox and Reform communities is simply lack of qualified individuals.

I don't feel I'm special. Anyone with a good Jewish education can find a niche to fill in Holland. However, I do feel I have an advantage. Having grown up in a small assimilated community, I can relate well with people from similar circumstances. It is therefore easy for me to teach people with a nominal or marginal relationship to Judaism. •



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PHILIP MILLER '86-'88

*Teaneck, N.J.; B.A. Latin American Studies, Columbia University, 1986.*

I came to Israel because of Pardes, and now two years later I am returning to the States. Except for a two-week visit when I was 14, I had never really thought much about Israel; nor did I know it is considered a particular virtue to come here to live. Israel just wasn't part of my home life or public school experience.

I heard about Pardes through friends and was encouraged to come by campus Rabbi Ruth Sohn who had been a student at Pardes ten years ago. It was consonant with the person<sup>al</sup> and intellectual interest I was taking in Judaism. I was influenced in this direction both by my mother who had become increasingly observant since I'd been in high school and by my junior year experience in Bogota, Colombia. Enthusiastically welcomed by its Jewish community, I soon became thoroughly involved in Jewish life there and formed strong bonds. My religious awakening has been a continuous process characterized by a correspondence between my personal spiritual search and my growing appreciation of what Judaism has to offer.

At Pardes I was amazed to learn how central the concept of being in the land of Israel is to Judaism. In fact it was a

revelation to me that the most revered authorities hold the opinion that this is where the Jewish people belong. Originally I didn't expect to find Jewish religious life any different here than in the diaspora, but in Israel it has so much more variety and fullness. For example, being able to experience, within the same week, a Hasidic rebbe's *tisch* and a *tiyul* (trip) to the Negev following in the footsteps of Avraham. Or celebrating the *Hakel* at the conclusion of the *shemitta* year with the reading of the Torah at the *Kotel* in the presence of 30,000-40,000 fellow Jews. Or walking the streets on Yom Kippur with not a car in sight so that you experience a direct correlation between what is going on both inside and outside.

In *tefila* we pray "...return our judges as we first had them..." by which we mean the *Sanhedrin* in the *Beit haMikdash* (the Holy Temple) and the *Hachamim* at Yavne. To say these words here in Israel where the *Beit haMikdash* was situated makes all the sense in the world because what we are doing is praying for the return of nationhood. The *Sanhedrin* was the religious, civic and governing body of the Jewish people and you need a civic entity for that to exist. You begin to realize that to make it come about you and the Jewish people as a whole have to be here.

Another impression I've gained here from *tiyulim*, conversations and classes is the sense of a Jewish people fighting for

their lives. Being in Israel you cannot help but realize the fragility of the Jewish people and how important each Jew is in holding the line.

Given the impact all this has had on me, it was inevitable that I would think about the possibility of living here. Knowing the needs of this society, and that there's a virtue in just being here, you cannot help but look beyond yourself and imagine truly becoming involved — doing army service, working, being productive and raising a family here. At the same time, however, in the back of my mind was the awareness that for several reasons this was not something I could do at this point in my life. For one, I could not go home for two weeks after 22 years of being closely involved with my family and say "this is it, goodbye gang."

For another, there is the scary, or perhaps I should say challenging, side to being in Israel. This is the sense that at any moment all kinds of things can happen. My first year here I taught English at an Arab school on the West Bank, thinking at the time that this was the way to develop grass roots relationships between communities. I learned a lot, including what people there are thinking, and it's not altogether reassuring. Furthermore, on a personal level, one is constantly being tested by the reality. When I pick up the newspaper and realize life is being lost on both sides I am forced to ask myself certain questions as well as ponder the moral implications. When I read about the death of a soldier, I ask why not me? When it is a Palestinian, I ask whether I should be doing more politically. This forces you to examine honestly your approach to life, and needless to say, produces a certain amount of tension.

By going back to the States at this time I am by no means agreeing with Jacob Neusner that the real place to be a Jew is in New York and that being in the army and facing these questions takes away from my experience as a Jew. What I simply need at this period is to gain some distance between myself and Israel. I look forward to thinking, processing, talking.

In New York I hope to avoid the pitfall of letting Judaism become an unthinking pastime. I don't want to forget the tensions and questions, the excitement and the intensity that dig into your soul. To ensure the level of my Jewish involvement I plan to continue learning for a while. I'm leaving Israel, but I cannot say I know what the future will hold. •



## A LETTER FROM THE SOVIET UNION

"...our family have finally decided..."

April 12, 1988

Dear Yedidya,

I'm surprised myself how greatly my life has changed since we met. Half a year ago I was just a stupid child, because I wasn't eager to go to Israel and believed I can live here forever and be happy. I was afraid of problems I had invented myself and wasn't afraid of things one should be afraid of. That time I had nothing, now I have things I wouldn't have dreamed about before. Firstly: I study Hebrew, and I can already speak it. Secondly: I have many acquaintances, among them are people who are deeply aware of Jewish religion and traditions. I celebrated Hanukka, Purim, Pesach together with them. Thirdly: I have found out that there are a lot of interesting places in Moscow connected with Jewish life. Fourthly: I have learnt a lot about our religion, recently I have begun to read *Tanach*. I read some 8-10 sentences a day. First I read English translation (1 or 2 times, till I remember what the extract is about), then I read commentaries in English, and then — the text in Hebrew, 10 times outloud. The Rabbi at the synagogue in "Maryina roscha" told me that besides it's a very good way to learn Hebrew.

Well, God has blessed me with the opportunity to study Hebrew, to learn about Jewish life, as you wished me in your message. And above all else, our family have finally decided to go to Israel. That is Mummy and I have decided finally. My brother is still doubting, but I hope he will decide soon.

I hope God will also bless me with the opportunity to join my people in Israel one day soon.

Best wishes to your wife and children.

Anya

## PARDES CONTINUES RUSSIAN CONNECTION

Several members of the Pardes faculty are teaching courses in Machanaim, a new evening *yeshiva* for men and women from the Soviet Union who are interested either in beginning or pursuing further the study of Jewish texts. Begun by Pinchas Polonsky, one of several Russian Jewish activists and teachers "adopted" by Pardes, classes are offered in both Russian and Hebrew and are available to students with diverse backgrounds.

## THE PARDES CONNECTION

news of classmates and staff...

**Steve Fine** '80-'81, is a member of a team that has pioneered in the application of infrared photography to the reading of faded sections of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

**Renee Kellner Rothberg** '87-'88 and husband, David, moved to Moshav Shorashim in June.

...and their weddings...

**Alice Harvey** '72-'73, to John B. Eigner. They are living in New York.

**Mollie Singer** '79-'80, to Larry Sacks. They are living in Jerusalem. She has an M.Sc. in environmental Science and is working for the Ministry of Agriculture as an agricultural advisor in the Lachish area.

**Renee (Maureen) Swartz** '84-'85, to Josef Halpert. They are living in Toronto where Renee is working as a trainer and educator in a computer consulting firm.

## THE COMPANY WE KEEP

■ During the eighteen years that MENACHEM REVIVI played a leadership role in the Department of Youth and Hechalutz (under whose aegis Pardes continues to function), the Department grew to serve 15,000 youngsters annually in programs ranging from two weeks to one year. Starting as community *sheliach* to Englewood, New Jersey, Revivi subsequently directed the Institute for Jewish Zionist Education, summer programs for youth at Kiryat Moriah, the Institute for Training Shelichim, and for two years represented the Youth and Hechalutz Department in the United Kingdom. For the past eight years, until leaving six months ago, he served as director general of the Department. During his tenure, Revivi worked zealously to see that Pardes budget lines were kept open. "Pardes does not separate Judaism and Zionism, is dedicated to pluralism and resists being labeled as representing only one particular branch of Judaism," said Revivi. "Given Pardes' approach to teaching Judaism, I felt that the Department was its natural home." Born in Israel, Revivi has a B.A. from Bar Ilan University and an M.A. from NYU in educational psychology. He lives with his social worker wife and three sons in Jerusalem and has recently begun a new career with the Charles Rosner Bronfman Foundation.

...and their babies...

**Penina Adelman** '79-'80 and husband Steven are the parents of a son, Daniel Isaac. They live in Framingham, Massachusetts.

**Dennis Beck-Berman** '72-'73 and wife Julia are the parents of a daughter, Sarah Elizabeth. They are living near Venice, Italy where Dennis is a military chaplain for U.S. forces in Italy.

**Marilyn Holzer Cohen** '86-'87 and husband Shmuel are the parents of a daughter, Nesya. They are living in Jerusalem.

**Shlomo Naeh**, Pardes faculty, and wife Chava are the parents of a daughter, Miriam.

**Kalman Neuman**, Pardes faculty, and wife Naomi are the parents of a daughter, Talia.

**Arlene Ruby** '85-'86 and husband Mickey Harel are the parents of a son, Noam Yisrael Harel. They are living in Jerusalem.

**Joanna Stark** '81-'82 and husband Jay Abramson are the parents of a son, Jacob Aaron Abramson.

**Avie Walfish**, Pardes faculty, and wife Ruthie are the parents of a daughter, Tzila Ayelet.

## KESHET ENROLLING NOW

KESHET, an eight-month work/study program coordinated by Pardes and the World Union of Jewish Students, in conjunction with the Pinchas Sapir Jewish Heritage Center, is for college graduates who wish to engage in Jewish study while also becoming involved with Jewish activist issues such as Soviet and Ethiopian Jewry. The program receives the support of the Aliya Department's Center for Ulpanim and Counseling for Young Adults. Places are still available for the coming academic year beginning November 1988. For information, contact Pardes.

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