

HAVRUTA

COMMENT | The fact that Pardes is bursting at the seams may not surprise those of us who know that we have an enrollment this year of 92 students (over half of whom are full-time), or those who attended or heard about the success of our new summer program (in which 70 students participated this past summer). But the real news is that we are expanding in another area as well. Pardes is fulfilling its commitment to *ahavat am Yisrael* by extending Pardes teachers and teaching, and consequently Pardes values, into the larger community, both here in Israel and abroad.

Teachers from Pardes are giving classes to members of two congregations in Netanya, and in Highland Park, New Jersey (see stories). Their impact is also felt in the *Shemita* Study Series, and in the *Mishna* Correspondence Course which we hope will be a useful learning tool for students interested in continuing their studies after Pardes, as well as for others who want to study Jewish sources, but are unable to attend classes on a regular basis. Growth is also evident in the expansion of our service project program in which students do volunteer work in the community one afternoon each week as an integral part of their studies (see *Havruta* no. 5). Furthermore, both Levi Lauer and Dov Berkovits, recently returned from trips to the United States, report that as our alumni body continues to grow, many former students are making major contributions to their Jewish communities.

What all this means is that Pardes is alive and well, with a potential for growth limited only

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PLAYING BEFORE GOD: Theater and the Jewish Religious Experience

by Yehudit Keshet

It is perhaps not surprising that for the past 2,000 years the orthodox Jewish community has offered resistance to the idea of theater as a legitimate Jewish activity (*Shabbat* 30b, *Megilla* 6a, *Avoda Zara* 70b). Nevertheless, our sources offer some tantalizing hints that this was not always the case. More than this, our ritual itself contains strong elements of drama, which have often performed two of the functions filled by theater in other cultures: an acting out of the deepest and

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most powerful psychic experiences in the life of the individual and the nation and serving as a medium of social-didactics.

An early indication of dramatic expression of a religious experience may be found in Exodus 15, the Song of the Sea which seems clearly to have been written for more than one speaker. Thus in 15:9 we hear, in contrast to the narrative, the actual cry of the pursuing foe: "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil..." A midrash tells us that the exclamation in verse 11: "Who is like unto Thee..." is the voice of Pharaoh himself acknowledging divine justice. R. Akiba (*Sota* 30b) expounds that the verses of the Song of the Sea were sung alternately by Moses and the Children of Israel in a great dialogue of redemption, and Rashi commends Miriam and the women in verse 21, whose prophetic gifts foretold the miracles to be performed and who came out of Egypt with "dance and drum" (verse 20) as a means of worship and thanksgiving.

The connection of dance (which is inseparable from theater) and drama to worship is very close. In II Samuel 6, verse 16, we read of King David "leaping and prancing" before the Lord, in celebration of bringing the Ark (indicative of the Divine Presence) to its resting place in Jerusalem. The King forgets the restraint incumbent upon a monarch and earns a reproof from his wife, Saul's daughter Michal. David replies "And I play before the Lord" (*ibid* 14). In other words, King David is given over to the worship of God. He plays, i.e. performs for Him alone, and this performance is an act of deep spiritual devotion.

It is however just this element of abandon and surrender in play (or in any other activity) which may have frightened later sages, for not only is it one of the most powerful of human experiences, but it can easily become an

end in itself, a form of "avoda zara," worship of false gods. As Adin Steinsaltz has said, "'playing before God' is the criterion of the truly Jewish artist — a world view which leaves no place for 'art for arts sake.'" The dividing line between the worship of the one true God and paganism is after all a very fine one.

There seem to be many indications of scriptural works intended for two or more voices. Just to name a few: Song of Songs, many psalms (notably 24, 66, 91, 100 and 105), The Book of Lamentations (*Eicha*) which appears to have been written for two voices and chorus ("*Eicha* as Drama," *Daf le Tarbut Toranit* 110, A. Strikowsky, Jerusalem, 1980). Whether or not it was ever performed, a dramatic reading of *Eicha* certainly solves some of the inner contradictions and questions which have puzzled commentators for generations.

No less an authority than Professor Yehezkiel Kaufman (*Toldot HaEmunah HaIsraelit*) asserts that Chapters 2 & 3 of the book of Hosea are actually what he calls "prophetic-dramatics." Professor Kaufman maintains that the prophet's marriage with the harlot (ibid 2: 3,4) and the birth of the children of harlotry (ibid 2: 6,7) are neither reality nor allegory but a drama played out complete with costumes and make-up by the legitimate (and respectable) wife and children of the prophet. The drama here is didactic, intended to bring the nation to a vivid realization of its sins. Are these examples, and others, the remnants of a vital literary tradition that was the expression of a profound religious feeling (as were the never-performed allegorical dramas of the Ramhal, R. Moshe Haim Luzatto, almost 2,500 years later), or do we have here a no less vital prophetic theater of protest and education which was actually played out before an audience? At all events, the tradition of rejoicing, or playing as an act of worship may be seen, through these and other sources, not only to be tolerated but actually encouraged in Jewish tradition at least up to the end of the First Temple period.

By the end of the Second Temple period however, we see no more than the faintest hint of nostalgia for the "good old days" when maidens danced in the vineyards on 15 Av and Yom Kippur (*Megillah* 30b). The nostalgia here is ethical, however, not aesthetic. This is not only the result of the chronic instability and social and religious upheavals of the period but is also the product of the *kulturkampf* (culture-war) waged by the Jewish leadership against the alluring civilization of the Greeks. Not only was theater considered to be the flower of that civilization, but it was also inevitably connected with idolatry and lewdness. Most plays, apart from

their content, involved some routine religious ceremonial (*Avoda Zara* 70b).

With the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE the central activity of the Jewish leadership was two-fold — the codification of laws which would ensure the survival of the Jewish national-religious entity, and the crystallization of a form of worship that would replace the very central role formerly played by the Temple service and the sacrifices. The resulting liturgy and the subsequent development of the synagogue, as the theater of Jewish religious and communal activity, wrought profound changes in Jewish religious life. The role of the individual worshipper became vital since there was no longer a priesthood to administer the rites. In a liturgy which re-enacted the cardinal events of the national-religious experience, the individual worshipper now engaged directly in a dialogue with God. The great events of Jewish experience were re-enacted on a daily basis (as for example the daily recital of Song of the Sea in Exodus 15), not as academic (or theatrical) episodes, but as a living experience in which he himself participated.

This experiential re-enactment of redemption went beyond the bounds of the synagogue liturgy and spilled over into the family sphere, as is most clearly seen in the Passover *seder* or the living in booths at Succot — two examples taken from a whole network of ritual acts (*mitzvot*) which confirm the minute-by-minute connection between the Jew and God. These, by their very intensity and essentially dramatic nature, provide the outlet for creativity which in other cultures finds expression in theater and dance. Although there are certainly many other factors which account for the absence of theater arts in Jewish culture up to the mid-nineteenth century, the fulfilling (and demanding) role played by the liturgy and ritual is by no means a negligible one.

There is an exceptional example of "Jewish theater," however, which may be seen to deviate from this notion. The *Purimspiel*, which developed in Germany and spread throughout the Ashkenazic communities from around 1550 onwards, drew heavily for its form on the pre-Lenten carnival mummings of Christian Europe (see Ahuva Belkin in *Asaph: Studies in Theater*, Tel Aviv, 1986). The *spiels*, which were based primarily on the story of Esther were of course subordinate to the general *mitzva* of Purim — namely to rejoice until the distinction between blessed Mordecai and wicked Haman becomes blurred. In purely sociological terms, however, the *spiel* allowed a day of "letting it all hang out," a release from the strictures of *halacha*: pupils became teachers, fools

scholars, men could dress as women and a blissful anarchy reigned before order was again restored.

In spite of the fact that religious ritual provided a focus for dramatic action, the *Purimspiel* indicates the profound need for acting out that existed in the traditional Jewish world and that was not satisfied by the drama of worship. The tradition of the wedding jester and the growth of Yiddish theater are further indications of this need. Yet the *Purimspiel* neither serves as a satisfactory model for a revived Jewish theater, nor as realization of the paradigm of "*vesikhati lifnei Hashem*" — playing before God. It is a sad fact that the majority of 20th century Jews (unlike their 19th century forebears) are not only spiritually and emotionally distanced from tradition, they are often entirely ignorant of it. Perhaps therefore a starting point for a Jewish theater revival may be found in a return to the sources (see Gabriella Lev's *Bruria*, for instance) as a means of clarifying our own present Jewish experience. If this kind of theater, as flawed as it may be, with all the difficulties it presents, does no more than stir the souls of a few Jews, somewhere on this globe, to an awareness of who they are (and ultimately before Whom they stand!) it will have justified itself. At a time when halachic Judaism is again facing a *kulturkampf*, in the form of secular values on the one hand and fundamentalism on the other, the development of a genuinely Jewish theater is not an idle luxury, but an educational necessity. ●

THE COMPANY WE KEEP

■ RABBI JAMES S. DIAMOND, Director of the Hillel Foundation at Washington University, St. Louis, is responsible for transforming Washington University Hillel into a center of serious intellectual ferment. Canadian by birth, Rabbi Diamond has a Ph.D. in comparative literature (he teaches modern literature at Washington University) and received his ordination from The Jewish Theological Seminary. Rabbi Diamond has, over the years, opened both his home and Hillel to annual meetings which enable Pardes to explain to campus and community what Pardes is all about. These meetings have also been helpful in assessing Jewish student concerns on campus. His wife, Judith, is financial officer of a private health plan and their three children are all currently at the University of Pennsylvania.

Rabbis and Rabbinical Students

Among the various institutions marked indelibly by the tumult of the sixties is the rabbinate. Those of us who grew up in America at that time perhaps can recall when one entered the rabbinate not only out of a desire to serve the Jewish community, but because it was one of the "professions," offering to freshly minted rabbis both instant high status and enviable income.

Today, however, much has changed, as reflected in the following four interviews with Pardes alumni. Three are now rabbinical students and one is a rabbi. Each one is concerned primarily with developing an informal closely knit community committed to learning and good works, and with demystifying the role of rabbi. Two of them, Mark and Sami, are contemplating undertaking an alternative career so that the nexus of their relationship to community need not be a monetary one. It is difficult to say whether this approach is characteristic of all of the 35 Pardes alumni who are either studying for or have already entered the rabbinate. This approach does seem, however, to be growing in popularity judging by the various alumni with whom we've spoken.

Pardes alumni may be found in all branches of the rabbinate, from Reform to Orthodox. Quite fortuitously, all four of the following stories are of individuals who happen to have come from Reform backgrounds and yet who are functioning today within a Conservative framework. What is not entirely fortuitous, however, is that for each of these individuals Pardes has had a major impact, both on their awareness of how essential learning is to them as Jews, and on their recognition of the centrality and importance of halacha.

J.K.

MARK SIEDLER, 1983-84.

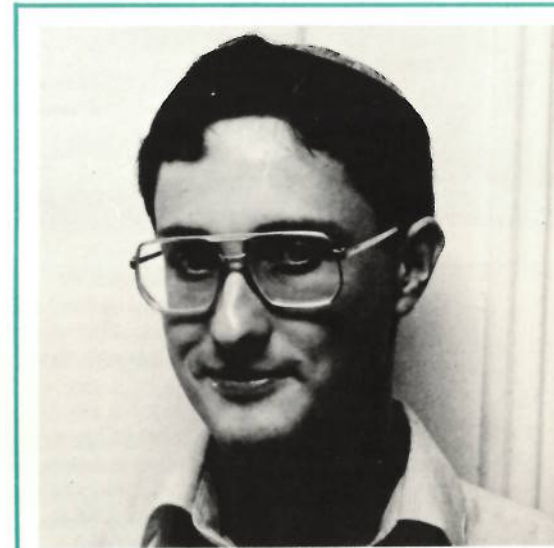
"I'm from a Reform background. My first real interest in Judaism, however, came from our religious school teacher while I was in high school. He would invite us to his home for Shabbat. It had a tremendous impact on me to see a Jew both committed and traditional, who loved Judaism and took it seriously.

"The summer after my freshman year at UCLA I went to The Brandeis-Bardin Institute. BBI provides a good introductory intellectual and philosophical background and stimulates one to start living and thinking Jewishly. I worked the following summer as a counselor at Camp Ramah in California, learning, along with the kids, how one acts as a Jew. I took some classes in Hebrew and Jewish studies. I also discovered that teaching gave me great pleasure, both at camp and at Friday night suppers.

"After college I decided to concentrate on Jewish studies. I applied to the Conservative movement's University of Judaism, where I spent a year and learned a lot. I felt, however, that I also wanted to explore the Orthodox world, so the following year, I went to Yeshiva University in Los Angeles. There I found differences between the other students and myself in terms of outlook. They were somewhat more uncritical than I. I stayed only six months, but still wanting to find out more about Orthodoxy, I went to Israel and studied in a yeshiva for the remainder of that year. I found the students where I was learning highly motivated. The forte there was Jewish texts, however, rather than Jewish issues. Since I felt the latter should be dealt with as part of one's studies, and not 'after hours', and since I was still struggling with my Judaism and with questions I hadn't yet resolved, I decided that Pardes was the place for me.

"By the end of my year at Pardes I felt comfortable with observance for the first time. I was no longer fighting the system. I think that being exposed to a variety of role models, and hearing teachers and students talk about issues and how they thought and felt helped me to resolve my own feelings. My textual skills, which were already good, continued to improve, but that was not why I had come to Pardes. The question now was where to go after Pardes. Originally I had tentatively planned to continue at the University of Judaism, and had been accepted in their rabbinical program. I was beginning to realize, however, that my observance was closer to an Orthodox model. Nevertheless, I found most Orthodox models too simplistic

and reductionist and that things were not as easy as they seemed to believe. I wanted an approach with a little sophistication. I believed in the historical method and in learning what was going on as *halacha* developed, rather than regarding it as unchanging and viewing it only as an end result.



Mark Siedler

"If Pardes had had a rabbinical program, I probably would have considered it, for Pardes had a profound effect on me. I find today when I talk about Jewish issues, I continually draw on learning from Pardes that I incorporated into myself. Instead I chose, after all my uncertainty, to attend The Jewish Theological Seminary.

"I still have problems. There is too much distancing in the system and not enough awe. Some students come here with a preconceived view of how Jewish they want to be and are unwilling to explore the issue. I am still trying to understand what it means to serve God, to serve my people and to serve all people. To do that, I feel I need to know how our system—the halachic one—has worked throughout our history. Others seem to want to hold on to tradition because they grew up with it. They value it as part of their legacy and seem content to use critical study to rationalize their already-existing convictions.

"When I finish, I want to create my own community. I am not comfortable with the structures that exist in most of the Conservative world. Typical is a large synagogue with hundreds of families, and because it is usually not situated locally, its members have to drive there. I work better on a one-to-one level, I'm not a public speaker, but am most effec-

tive having someone at my Shabbat table or in a bunk in camp. There's also a problem of synagogue boards dictating what you should do and causing conflict with what you believe to be right. I want to create my own environment, probably in L.A. I would want to get people interested in studying, in doing *mitzvot* and in *gemilut hasadim* (caring for and being involved with those who need help). Also, I prefer informal settings, studying and davening together in people's homes or making a shelter or food kitchen. The responsibility should not stop with other Jews, but extend to the non-Jewish community.

"What I like to do when I'm teaching is to teach about Israel as an integral part of the system. I believe in it as the future of the Jewish people and as a 'light unto the nations'. Our goal should be to create a nation that is an example to others. So, after emphasizing the importance of Israel, I would want to bring my community to Israel. In the short term, I feel I can be more effective here, but in the long term I want to end up in Israel.

"The model I have in mind is a congregation that comes together to learn, where the fee for participation is a commitment to learn rather than a monetary one. Therefore I will have to be financially independent. According to the Rambam and others, one should not receive money from teaching Torah. Since I want to be able to do this on my own and not have to depend on anyone for support, I decided to pick something that would pay enough part time to enable me to function as a rabbi and that would give me flexibility—in a word, computers.

"I had a couple of computer classes in high school and some on-the-job experience while I was in Israel. I also taught computers at Camp Ramah. In

fact I've tried to use interest in computers to teach Judaica. Therefore, it's not new to me, and I feel I can use it to earn a living and to teach. Now that I'm actually making some money with it, I see a variety of possibilities.

"Here in America, those doing even the minimum as a Jew usually take the first steps themselves. If people such as these are reached the right way, I think they can only become more involved. Whereas in Israel, it is more problematic, because the population that is unaccustomed to religious observance is often anti-religious. In any event, I see my role as rabbi, whether here or in Israel, as reaching out to the uninvolved." ◊

PAM HOFFMAN, 1973-74.

"The whole thing is very mysterious to me. I grew up in a small town in Massachusetts where we were the only Jewish family. I was never really socialized Jewishly. In fact, my entire Jewish background is idiosyncratic. Yet here I am in rabbinical school, after having lived eight years in Israel.

"During my senior year in high school, I went to Israel on a half-year exchange program. This was my first contact with Jews who were young and living on the land. I attended high school with them. The following year I was back in Massachusetts looking for Jewish fellowship at the time the *havura* movement was just starting. Havurat Shalom was located in the Boston area and one of its members was a teacher in the Reform Sunday School I attended, a half hour drive from our town. During that year, I even remember feeling I wanted to be a rabbi (and that was before Sally Priesand became the first ordained woman rabbi).

"Though I was too young to be a member, I was welcomed at the *havura* and went every Shabbat morning with my parents. In fact, this represented a significant development for the whole family. Until then they had been moving away from their roots. Havurat Shalom was the first time I saw young adults choosing to create Jewishly (this was in the early 70's). There was political consciousness, social awareness and women's issues. I saw that Judaism was also for the young, the creative and the energetic.

"After high school, I went to Brandeis University for a year and then took a leave and joined my parents who had moved to Washington. There I became involved in the Fabrengen Havura and in teaching Hebrew school. I was active in Fabrengen, especially in its liturgical dimensions, at a time when women's awareness was just beginning to unfold. It was also the time of the first national Jewish women's conference.

"Another providential piece. Michael Swirsky (the founder of Pardes) had come to Washington to recruit and I went to hear him (I had known him three years earlier at Havurat Shalom). I had been doing some learning on my own—all secondary sources and in translation—and realized how little I knew. It seemed, if I were interested in growing Jewishly in depth and seriousness, that Pardes was the natural place for me.

"I went to Pardes in 1973 with the intention of studying in Israel for just one year. Dov (Berkovits) was director and we were a small group. It had a profound impact on me—the Yom Kippur War, the intensity, the tragedies, the cold, hard winter. This made us very close. There were also individuals who touched me deeply. I began to be changed in a way that I can only regard as a blessing.

"I wanted to finish my B.A., but I also wanted to stay in Israel, so I went to the Hebrew University, graduating in 1978. I majored in Jewish thought with a minor in Jewish folklore and Yiddish. I also worked at Pardes, helping Dov in his last year as director. Then I began working toward an M.A. in folklore. The rabbinate was on a backburner all this time. Sometimes it would pop out and remind me it was not a resolved issue, and periodically I would toy with the idea of rabbinical school. In 1979 the Seminary looked for the first time at the issue of women's ordination and decided to table it.

"The truth is I was torn. My love for Jerusalem is very strong, and I ache for it now, but my sadness is that I never really found my place. My primary home and community was Pardes but I was never part of the *dati* (religious) community, as narrowly defined, even though I had become increasingly committed to *halacha*, and I was certainly not part of the *hiloni* (secular) one. Despite my longings for a corner of my own, I never really found my place. I was one of the founders of a women's *minyan* and was also involved in an egalitarian *minyan*, but it was unstable and never became indigenous. I was beginning to think seriously of returning to the States and going to rabbinical school when Dov stepped in and suggested I work with him to initiate a Jewish Arts Festival which he saw as potentially unifying various sectors of the Jewish community. I stayed with it for a year, but there was no budget, no funding, and it began to look imperilled. So, with heaviness of heart, I decided to return to America and try rabbinical school. I felt I owed it to myself. One year had turned into eight in Jerusalem.

"I went to Hebrew Union College one semester, but I had grown in a different direction after living in religious



Pam Hoffman

Jerusalem for eight years and knew it wasn't where I belonged. So I took a leave of absence and became assistant director of Hillel at Rutgers. I did at Rutgers what I couldn't do in Jerusalem and mounted an art festival. During this period, the Seminary decided to accept women (October 24, 1983) and it became clear that this was what I was waiting for. In the Conservative movement I could be an halachically committed Jew—something that had become part of my essence.

"I want to be a good rabbi and a compassionate one. I feel in a sense that I carry with me the Pardes experience, the Jerusalem experience; and my commitment to *ahavat Yisrael* and to *klal Yisrael* is what I want my rabbinate to be. Although I liked my work with Hillel, I was frustrated that I only dealt with 17-20 year olds. I want to work with the full range of human experience.

"I want a Conservative *shitebel* in Jerusalem. That's my personal messianic vision—young Jews with families, looking for a spiritual leader to grow with them, or a larger congregation working on a *havura* model, subdividing into smaller groups. I think Jews are looking for intimacy and warmth Jewishly. Not every Jew I come in contact with has had the privilege of spending eight years in Jerusalem or of studying with a Dov Berkovits or a Moshe Shapiro, or of learning Jewish tradition and sources. I would like to bring to others the vitality that lies in Jewish learning. Jews in America don't have access; it's not part of the American Jewish experience.

"As a woman, I feel my class is paving the way for future generations. Now I'm sheltered at the Seminary, but I am apprehensive what it will be like when I have to look for a full-time job. A woman brings to what she does different sensibilities—a different presence and way of being—and I think it's an extraordinarily powerful experience for people when they see the rabbinate not as authoritarian and removed. I believe that when people see women leading services, it will awaken something dormant. Women will see that they too can participate responsibly in the involved life of the community. People frequently tell me that until they saw me do it, they didn't think it could be done. I envy women who have models of women who are mothers and wives and rabbis.

"It saddens me when people say that the ordination of women contributes to divisiveness within the Jewish community. We women in the program feel we can only serve to bring in the apathetic, the alienated and the assimilated, because of the type of rabbi we want to be. I see my decision as an act of strengthening and fortifying the Jewish community." *

MICHAEL FRIEDLAND, 1984-85.

"Ever since I was a little kid, I wanted to be a rabbi. I liked my local rabbi and was impressed by the magnificence and glory that seemed to me inherent in his role. Today, however, I prefer davening with 15 to 20 people in a small place. I've always been involved with the Jewish community, and with Israel, where I spent three of the last four years (including the one-year program at the Hebrew University). In fact, the only way I can justify to myself not being in Israel, which I believe is the place for the Jewish people to be, is by building Jewish community here.

"I grew up in the Reform movement in Chicago. My parents were very active in it, and I was involved in its youth movement. I became more traditional, however, while I was an undergraduate at Brandeis. There were many Jews on campus and an active Hillel. There was also a lot of switching, from those who had been educated in Hebrew day schools and then decided to drop everything, to the assimilated who became more observant. It was an exciting place. I was active in the Conservative and Orthodox *minyanim*, and my social circle was derived from them. I was also active working for Soviet Jewry and with the aged. But I never gave up my ties to Reform.

"Because I was fairly observant at the time I graduated from Brandeis, no one understood my applying to HUC. However, knowing that I was at that time still picking and choosing which *mitzvot* I wanted to observe, I continued to feel more Reform than anything else. I viewed Conservative Judaism as a halachic movement and assumed I didn't fit in. In my eyes I was a Reform Jew who happened to be more observant than the others at HUC. But, I was miserable.

"During my first year at Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem, we were frequently told that as Reform rabbis we had to learn even more than other rabbis if we wished to make informed choices. But I found some people discarding without having a sufficient basis of understanding. To avoid becoming disillusioned, I knew I had to do some serious learning and only then see how I would feel about being selective. That is the reason I went to Pardes.

"I was living at the time with two Pardes students who loved it. So, after my first year at HUC, I went to Pardes. I wanted to stay in Israel as long as I could. What Pardes did more than anything was give me positive role models—individuals who were observant but tolerant and who were very sensitive to the tension between Judaism and modernity. I met teachers who exempli-



Michael Friedland

fied not only a sense of humility before God, but also great scholarship. But the greatest impact on me was the realization that learning the text has to be a constant process, a dialogue between the individual and the tradition. This in fact becomes one's constant spiritual recharger, for by continuing learning, Judaism is made afresh, and this is what I would like to impart in my own teaching.

"Teaching is what I like best, especially making people more sensitive to certain issues. For example, I was trying to teach *tzedaka* to the kids I work with and found them referring to the homeless as bums. It was a challenge to make them understand. I brought in someone who actually worked with the homeless and could speak from personal experience. It was then that they listened and began to realize what it means."

"Perhaps the biggest change for me was that before Pardes, I viewed the overall halachic structure as unimportant and doing individual *mitzvot* as all-important. Pardes made me see, however, that structure is really of utmost importance, for if you're observant, you're at least tied in somehow, but if you're not, and your faith wavers, you're left high and dry.

"After my year at Pardes I went back to HUC and felt out of it. There were good teachers and terrific students, and I was comfortable socially, but I found myself frustrated on religious issues. For example, I'm not comfortable praying with the Reform *sidhur*. Many at HUC keep certain observances because they think they are important, not because they accept the obligation to practice them. I don't see myself as an Orthodox Jew, that is, willing to unequivocally accept the yoke of the kingdom of heaven and of the *mitzvot*. Nevertheless,

if a *mitzva* doesn't make sense to me, I don't discard it, but feel maybe I should work toward doing it. I wrestle with it. The truth is I want to be in a community where people are living and experiencing Judaism in a similar fashion. That is why I am transferring to the Jewish Theological Seminary.

"How does being at HUC compare to Pardes? At Pardes, the learning is entirely voluntary without academic credit, and the motivation is high. But here in New York, it is expensive to live and one needs a job or jobs in order to get by. Students often have families and obligations outside of school. Also, here the teaching style is academic. You sit at a lecture, take notes and go to the library. The voices of the Jewish texts are in dialogue, so it is appropriate to learn them in dialogue, but the *havruta* dynamic of discussion and dialogue is not present here. Also, people's goals are different. This is a professional school and people here want to earn a degree and learn a profession.

"People live Jewishly in the States like weekend athletes. It's not something that encompasses one's life. To be Jewish is to be constantly aware of the impact Judaism has on you, to experience an awe of God, and also a sensitivity to the Jewish people. For me, community is where people learn, pray, steep themselves in tradition, go to Soviet Jewry rallies and involve themselves with the problems and culture of the larger society. I think one should be both Jewishly aware and at the same time receptive to the wisdom of the non-Jewish world. When you put the two of them together, there's going to be a certain tension that should be dealt with. The ideal to strive for is a learning, believing, sensitive Jewish community." ●



Sami Barth

SAMI BARTH, 1982-83.

"I was born in Haifa, left at 1-1/2 years, grew up in London, studied mathematical physics at Sussex University in Brighton and rabbinics at the Leo Baeck College in London. My first pulpit was in Brighton, England and I am now rabbi of the Genesis Hebrew Center—Congregation Agudas Achim in Tuckahoe, New York.

"My family were founding members of a Reform congregation in North London. Reform in England doesn't correspond to its American namesake, but is more traditional, bearing a resemblance to Conservative Judaism. I went to an Orthodox day school where I received an excellent secular education and gained some familiarity with basic texts and traditional services. Nevertheless I objected to the imposition of Jewish values and practices on a non-orthodox student body.

"By the time I left high school, I was broadly hostile to things Jewish. While an undergraduate (I started out interested in science and technology, the 'how' questions), I began to be dissatisfied with the idea of working in the scientific world. I attended meditation classes at a Buddhist Center in Brighton, became vegetarian and started seriously studying martial arts.

"I decided to take a year's leave from my undergraduate education to reflect, and it was at that time that I became interested in seeking my Jewish roots. In fact, it was on a Buddhist retreat that I learned that though Buddhism offered important insights, I was not a Buddhist; the broad package didn't work for me. I decided rather to look into what was available Jewishly.

"I'd retained some links with the Jewish world—attending occasional student functions and weekend seminars—but until then I really had no adult interest in it. Nevertheless a seed planted when I was a child began to germinate. I had always had great respect for the rabbi of the synagogue in which I grew up, and admired the way in which he conducted himself as a person. During High Holidays, as early as my seventh or eighth year, I remember wishing to emulate him. He was a positive image and example. During my leave of absence from university this long-submerged ambition moved from the subconscious to the conscious level. I decided to apply to the Leo Baeck College. I knew it produced young well-thought-of rabbinic graduates. On various levels it was an attractive thing to do. I enjoyed being a student and the prospect of being a student for another five or six years seemed irresistible.

"At that time in outlook and appearance I was definitely a part of the so-

called 'counter-culture'. When I applied to rabbinical school, I never saw myself doing the conventional thing of becoming a pulpit rabbi. In fact, I thought that being a congregational rabbi was a form of 'selling out'. I was, and still am, committed to the idea of *havura*, a less professional and more collective approach to Jewish life. I wanted to find my way into teaching, counseling, student work, or even work in a totally different profession and find non-professional ways to share the learning and skills I would be acquiring at Leo Baeck.

"One of the biggest problems in self-identification I have at the moment is that ideals and ideas which I held when I entered rabbinical school are still true for me. That is, on some level I continue to have difficulty with the whole notion of being a pulpit rabbi. I do have doubts as to whether my long-term future is to remain professionally in the pulpit rabbinate. Therefore, on my agenda is to learn an alternative skill, perhaps in computing, as I have some background in mathematics.

"Interestingly, it was at Pardes that I allowed myself to see more clearly the positive facets of congregational work—that congregations do in fact meet real needs of real Jewish people, and that rabbis often help them to do that. Nevertheless I've found, both in England and here, that real rewards, such as helping people make a good connection with Jewish tradition, can come at the most unexpected times. For example, I was hiking one day and happened to meet several Jewish people very distanced from Jewish life. As we began to talk, it emerged that I was their first point of contact in twenty years with anything Jewish having a face with which they could identify. I learned later that they are attending classes at Leo Baeck. And this was the result of a chance encounter twenty miles from nowhere.

"Being a rabbi helps to make all kinds of openings available for Jewish dialogue with people. But I also realize that any well-informed observant person can be effective in conversation. So I'm left with the question of what particular advantage it is to be a rabbi, a Jewish professional. I have only fragments of an answer. I don't pretend to have a philosophy entirely consistent with the work I do. I find it rewarding to help a congregation choose the way it wishes to organize the content of its *avodah* (service to God), its teaching and other activities, and to help its members find an appropriate way of conducting their Jewish lives.

"I can't imagine not being involved in Jewish communal life, but I do find it uncomfortable being seen as a professional Jew. The *havura* concept, by con-

trast, does not rely on a professional for leadership, but is based on sharing responsibility equally. Rabbis are supposed to be teachers, not priests, yet no matter how much I deny it in theory as part of my Jewish theology, certain 'priestly' expectations are projected onto rabbis. We are often seen as Jewish clergy, leading a different kind of Jewish life, and having access to answers, spiritually and halachically, that are not available to the remainder of the community. In other words, a rabbi is frequently viewed as a different kind of Jew, and it is often difficult to surmount this preconception.

"Despite my personal difficulties with the role, and with the sometimes inappropriate expectations put on the spouse of a rabbi, and with the cumulative number of unscheduled hours which can take their toll of married life, I feel my work is worthwhile and appreciated. I do, however, have the opportunity now of working for a graduate degree and thus face the question of whether to pursue my personal and academic interests and work on a Ph.D. in Talmud or in medieval *halachic* texts, or to do something 'sensible' and work for an M.A. in computer science which would give me the option of earning my *par-nasa* (living) outside of the professional rabbinate.

"Jewish life at Pardes and in Israel was very rich for the years I spent there. I often find myself evaluating my spiritual life today as to the extent to which it comes close to my recollection of time spent learning at Pardes. At Pardes I learned to love learning, whether in *havruta* or alone. I acquired textual skills and insight into how to learn. At Leo Baeck I learned from my Bible professor to be very concerned with the structure of text and the way a hidden message can be coded into it. At Pardes I learned that the same process works in rabbinic writings. There is more to the way the Tur, the Rambam and the Shulchan Aruch are put together than an arbitrary arrangement of laws. At Pardes I also made lifelong friends among students and teachers, and met my wife (Tobie Weisman).

"I call myself *shomer mitzvot*, but translate *shomer* as 'guarding' or 'looking out for' rather than 'observing'. I've never been able to accept the idea of *halacha* as other than, at least in part, a human construction, subject to human failings and eligible for re-evaluation in each generation. With regard to particular rituals, I often see a pair of scales, with the demands of *halacha* in one and human needs in the other. I feel each ritual choice has to be guided by weighing the two. I sometimes pray that the One who holds the scales is pleased by our struggles and wrestlings with Torah." ◊

SHEMITA SERIES

Interest in *shemita*, from its halachic to its economic aspects, is apparent in the large turn-out at Pardes to the Keren Pardes-sponsored lecture series. Speakers are Chanan Porat, Professor Shmuel Safrai, Rabbi Reuben Aberman, Dr. Meir Tamari and Rabbi Yochanan Fried. Participants, who include both those new to Pardes as well as Bonei Pardes, have the option of an hour and a half *havruta* study under the guidance of Pardes faculty prior to each lecture.

SHABBAT MINYAN

Students and Bonei Pardes within walking distance of Pardes now have the option of attending Shabbat morning services organized by Natan Margolit '80-'81, '82-'83, '85-'87. Services are led by both current students and Bonei Pardes.

WUJS CONFERENCE

Pardes coordinated a three-day workshop on Jewish education as part of the World Union of Jewish Student Conference (WUJS) held in Jerusalem in December. Entitled "Creating Commitment to a Jewish Future," the conference attracted 1200 students from all over the world.

KEREN PARDES SEMINARS

Commenting on the intensity of involvement of participants in the first Keren Pardes Seminar at the Highland Park (N.J.) Conservative Temple and Center, Dov Berkovits reports that the program is off to a successful start. Rabbi Berkovits, the first of several Pardes faculty teaching in this new program, led a seminar on "Challenge of Political Sovereignty for Traditional Judaism". The Seminars, jointly sponsored by Keren Pardes and The Highland Park Temple under Rabbi Yaakov Hilsenrath, are designed to expose bright and influential American Jews to the thinking and experience of their Israeli counterparts.

According to Rabbi Berkovits, "Rabbi Hilsenrath has virtually turned the Highland Park Temple into a community committed to learning Torah. Every week 500 members of the congregation attend the Temple's adult education classes. At a time when indifference and assimilation are so widespread, it is uplifting to see small pockets of intelligent professionals demonstrating an awakening desire for Torah learning and practice. I personally feel that it is exciting for Pardes to be involved in teaching a community of this kind." Other Pardes faculty teaching in this series are Jonathan Cohen, Zvi Wolff and Yosef Leibowitz.



HOT LUNCH PROGRAM

No more mad dashes to the *makoleit* (grocery) during lunch hour or filling up on bread, cheese and bisli. Students and staff at Pardes can now take advantage of appetizing vegetarian home-cooked meals, planned, prepared and lovingly served by fellow students. The hot lunch program is the brainchild of Cindy Weiner (New Hyde Park, New York), assisted by Kathryn Whitney (Boston) and Sheryl Roosth (Corpus Christi, Texas). According to Cindy, for whom the best way to stay healthy and happy is to eat well, "the purpose of our efforts is to provide wholesome meals at a reasonable price at a time when we are not in class and can all be together". Undaunted by cooking for large numbers, Cindy says she learned to cook at home and cooked for a co-op while at Tufts. Meals are served four days a week from 1:50-2:45.

SUMMER PROGRAM

The Pardes Summer Program, now in its third year, enables English-speakers to engage in up to two months of intensive study of Jewish texts or to participate in a part-time and less demanding exposure to Jewish learning. Courses are offered for both beginning and advanced students in two one-month sessions: July 6-30 and August 3-27. Those with limited background in Jewish studies have a choice of *Humash* and/or *Mishna* two to four mornings a week and of an afternoon program organized on topics such as The Chosen People, Religious Zeal and Social Responsibility, Relations Between Jews and Non-Jews, Israel and Diaspora. For those with a strong background in Jewish studies, an Introduction to *Gemara* is offered four mornings a week. Brochures and registration forms are available from Pardes.



More than twenty Pardes students donated blood to Magen David Adom in December. Shown here, Myra Gutterman, '85-'87.

NETANYA SERIES

Pardes faculty are continuing to teach the Netanya congregation of Rabbi Emanuel Forman in a special bi-weekly lecture series. The topic this year is "Women and *Halacha*."

JEWISH WOMEN AND HALACHA

"Participation of Women in *Minyan*" and "Image of Women in *Kabbalah*" were the subjects of talks presented by Pardes Rabbis Arie Strikowsky and Dov Berkovits at the First International Conference on Women and Halacha which took place in Jerusalem, December 28-31. Also from Pardes was student Linda Gradstein, M.A., Georgetown University, who presented a paper on "The Status of Women in Orthodox Judaism and Classical Islam: Feminist or Misogynist?" The conference, under the auspices of the Israel Ministry of Justice, drew over 400 participants, mostly women, including many from overseas. Speakers were women and men from diverse areas of expertise and representing a broad spectrum of opinion. These included rabbinical and legal scholars, heads of *yeshivot*, government officials, heads of Jewish and women's organizations, attorneys and authors. A field trip to Pardes was one of the scheduled events of the conference.

THE PARDES CONNECTION

news of classmates and staff . . .

Lynn Sussman-Alster '80-'81, passed the Israel Bar examination and is working for Luz Industries in Jerusalem.

Aryeh and Shoshana Meir '83-'84, are living in London, Ontario where Aryeh is working on his M.B.A. at the University of Western Ontario.

Rachel Montagu '80-'82, is rabbi of Cardiff New Synagogue in Wales.

Shlomo Naeh, Pardes faculty, has been awarded a scholarship for doctoral studies by the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture.

Sybil Sheridan '78-'80, is rabbi at Swindon Reform Community, England. She and her husband, **Rabbi Jonathan Romain**, '77-'78 are the parents of two sons.

. . . and their weddings . . .

Iris Althof '82-'86, and **Yacobi Dashiff Bar-Chaim** '83-'85. They are living in Migdal Haemek.

Debra Blog '80-'81 to Larry Zisman. They are both in medical school in the Bronx.

Claudia Dreifuss '80-'81, to Phillip Bollag. They are living in Zurich.

Moshe Gresser '83-'85, and **Ruth Stoll** '81-'83. They are living in Chicago.

Tamar Lange '80-'81, to Alan C. Schriger. They are living in Jerusalem. Tamar is a dietitian and Alan a student at Yeshivat Hamivtar.

Jeffrey (Tzvi) Stern '83-'84, '85-'86 and **Frances (Avital) Rodriguez** '85-'86. They are living in New York.

Matt Tannin '84-'86 and **Janice Gould** '85-'86. They are living in New York.

. . . and their babies . . .

Arieh Lev Breslaw '81-'83 and **Anne Lemieux** '84-'86, are the parents of a daughter, Leah Devorah. They are living in Jerusalem.

Yedidya Fraiman '78-'80, '82-'83, Assistant Director of Pardes, and **Susan** '80-'81, are the parents of a son, Amitai Avraham.

Lili Goldstein Kahan '83-'84 and husband **Yehoshua** are the parents of a son, Elisha Noam. They are living in Nashville, Tennessee where Yehoshua is rabbi of a congregation.

Fred Morgan '80-'81 and wife Sue are the parents of a son, Joel. Fred is rabbi of Northwest Surrey Synagogue, England.

Gavriel Myers '83-'85 and wife Michal are the parents of a daughter, Jendell Galia. They are living in Jerusalem.

Kalman Neuman, Pardes faculty, and wife Naomi are the parents of a son, Zvi Binyamin Yaakov.

Walter Rothschild '81-'82 and wife Jacqueline are the parents of a daughter, Nehama. Walter is rabbi of the Sinai Synagogue in Leeds, England.

Sarah Laidlaw Tilevitz '78-'80 and husband Orrin are the parents of a daughter, Yael Zahava. They are living in Brooklyn.

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by our financial resources. It also means that at a time when indifference, on the one hand, and divisiveness, on the other, are taking a terrible toll of the Jewish community, Pardes continues to remain committed to a model of learning in which tolerance and communal concerns go hand in hand with the teaching of Torah. As alumni and friends of Pardes I think we should be aware that considerably more people could take advantage of our existing programs and potential new ones were we able to expand our faculty and provide more financial aid for students. If we want to extend Pardes' impact and the values which it has so successfully sustained for 14 years, then now is the time to get involved.

Jane Kimchi

A LOVE STORY

As editor of *Havruta* it is especially gratifying to receive news items and comments from readers and to know that we are read and appreciated. Nothing, however, has given me greater pleasure than learning that through the pages of *Havruta*, two Bonei Pardes, met each other, fell in love and decided to marry. Needless to say, all of this places an awesome responsibility on *Havruta*. For, in addition to the various purposes for which *Havruta* was originally intended — providing a Pardes connection for former students, informing family and friends about Pardes, introducing Pardes to newcomers and presenting a forum for Pardesian thought and values — it is now, also, serving the Pardes community as matchmaker.

J.K.

HAVRUTA, a newsletter of Machon Pardes — the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies, Rehov Gad 10, Jerusalem 93662, Telephone (02) 717975, 711755, is published by Keren Pardes — the Pardes Foundation for Jewish Education. If you would like to receive additional copies of HAVRUTA or submit articles for publication, contact Machon Pardes at the above address
Deadline for the next issue: April 1, 1987

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