

FACULTY BIOGRAPHIES

Elisha Ancselovits



Elisha teaches Halakha as Practical Philosophy at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies and in Yeshivat Maale Gilboa, in addition to a number of Orthodox and secular Israeli and European institutions. He has been a postdoctoral and guest researcher and lecturer in both Jewish studies and in legal theory at various universities in different continents and is currently a fellow at Emory University's Center for the Study of Law and Religion. Elisha, who holds rabbinic and judicial ordination (Yoreh Yoreh and Yadin Yadin), has a Ph.D. on the history of Jewish Law and an M.A. in Modern Jewish Studies aside from graduate studies in Medieval Jewish History. In addition, he has taught Biblical and Second Temple Law, critical Talmud, critical Zohar and Modern Jewish and European Philosophy. Most recently, he has advanced his mentoring of men and women sages (rabbis and upcoming dayyanim) by opening a kollel program, Bet Midrash Hukkim Hakhamim.

Dov Berkovits



Rabbi Dov Berkovits is the former Director and Senior Faculty member of the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies; Co-Founder and former Educational Director of Nesiyah; Teacher and Founding Member at Elul; Founding Senior Faculty at the Yakar Synagogue in Jerusalem and former Research Assistant to Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz. He is currently the Director of Beit-Av, an institute named in memory of his father, Rabbi Eliezer Berkovits, dedicated to creativity and renewal through Torah. Dov is the author of articles on Jewish environmental thought and Judaism and Art. He has published three books, most recently *The Temple of Life - Marriage and the Sanctity of Relationships* (Koren Press). He is a graduate of the University of Chicago and Yeshiva University, with degrees in Philosophy and Jewish History.



Rahel Berkovits



Rahel Berkovits is a senior faculty member at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, where she has been teaching Mishnah, Talmud and Halakha for over twenty years. Rahel lectures widely in both Israel and abroad especially on topics concerning women and Jewish law and Jewish sexual ethics. She is the Halakhic Editor and a writer for *Hilkhot Nashim*, the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance's Halakhic Source-Guide Series, recently published by Koren Publishing. Rahel is a founding member of Congregation *Shirah Hadasha*, a halakhic partnership Synagogue, and serves on their *halakha* committee. In June 2015, Rahel received Rabbinic Ordination from Rabbis Herzl Hefter and Daniel Sperber.

David Bernstein



Dr. David Bernstein holds a BA and MA in History and a PhD in Religious Education from New York University. He also attended Yeshivat HaMivtar. David has been the Dean of Pardes since 1998. Previously, he was the Director of Midreshet Lindenbaum, popularly known as Brovender's, for 12 years. He was a Jerusalem Fellow at the Mandel School for Jewish Education in Jerusalem from 1996-1998. Before making aliyah in 1984, David was the Director of Informal Education at the Ramaz Upper School in New York City, where he created and taught a 2-year curriculum integrating world and Jewish history.

Levi Cooper



Rabbi Dr. Levi Cooper holds an LLB, LLM and PhD from the Law Faculty of Bar-Ilan University, and is a member of the Israel Bar Association. His Jewish education was at Chabad, Shaalvim Hesder Yeshiva, the Bar-Ilan University Kollel and Beit Morasha. He is the Spiritual Leader of HaTzur VeHaTzohar in Zur Hadassah, a mixed religious and secular neighborhood outside Jerusalem and is active in the Tzohar Movement. Levi is an Educational Advisor to the Jewish community of Istanbul and leads tours of Poland for Heritage Seminars. He publishes a column in the Jerusalem Post and is a Contributing Editor for *Jewish Education Leadership*, the journal of Bar-Ilan's Lookstein Center. At Pardes, Levi teaches Chumash, Hasidut and Rambam. Levi's books, *Relics from the Present – Contemporary Reflections of the Talmud*, volumes I and II were published by Pardes in conjunction with Maggid Press.



Mike Feuer



Rabbi Mike Feuer has a BA in Environmental Geology from the Colorado College and an MA in Sustainable International Development from Brandeis University. Since making aliyah in 2002, Rav Mike has learned Torah in a number of Jerusalem area institutions, including Yeshivat HaMivtar, the Mir Yeshiva and Sulam Yaakov. He received semicha (rabbinic ordination) from Sulam Yaakov in conjunction with completing the Israeli Rabbinate's laws of kashrut certification. He has taught in numerous post-high school programs before finding his home at Sulam Yaakov and Pardes. Mike currently teaches Hasidut, Rav Kook, and Halakhah at Pardes. Mike is the co-author of a work of biblical fiction – *The Lamp of Darkness*, and has a very popular history podcast series on Pardes' Elmad website called "The Jewish Story."

Gila Fine



Gila Fine is the editor in chief of Maggid Books (Koren Publishers Jerusalem). She is also a teacher of Aggada at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies, exploring the stories of the Talmud through philosophy, literary criticism, psychoanalysis, and pop-culture. Gila is the former editor of *Azure: Ideas for the Jewish Nation* and has previously taught at Hebrew University, Tel Aviv University, and the London School of Jewish Studies. Haaretz has called her "a young woman who is on her way to becoming one of the more outstanding Jewish thinkers of the next generation."

Nechama Goldman Barash



Nechama Goldman Barash made aliyah from Philadelphia over 20 years ago after graduating from Stern College. She studied for three years in Matan's Advanced Talmud Institute and finished a master's degree in Talmud at Bar-Ilan University. She is a graduate of Nishmat's Yoetzet Halacha program and has been certified to teach brides before their weddings, as well as qualifying as a sex educator through Yahel and the Eden Center. She also studied for three years in Matan's advanced halakha program, Hilkhata. She teaches contemporary halakha and Talmud at Matan and Pardes, as well as Talmud and women and halakha in Torah V'Avodah (TVA), a Bnei Akiva gap year program based in Matan. She is an active member of Beit Hillel and participates in interfaith dialogue through Roots, based in Gush Etzion, close to where she lives with her family. She is currently working on a book dealing with matters of gender and halakha.



Meesh Hammer-Kossoy



Dr. Rabbi Meesh Hammer-Kossoy teaches Talmud and the Social Justice Track at Pardes. Originally from Washington DC, Meesh has a BA in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies from Brandeis University, and a MA and PhD from New York University. Her dissertation explored the courageous manner in which the rabbis of the Talmud created a new criminal punishment system. In 2015, Meesh completed her studies at Beit Midrash Har'el and received Rabbinic Ordination from Rabbis Herzl Hefter and Daniel Sperber.

Michael Hattin



Rabbi Michael Hattin is a master Teacher of Tanakh at Pardes and the Director of the Beit Midrash for the Pardes Center for Jewish Educators. He studied for semicha at Yeshivat Har Etzion and holds a professional degree in architecture from the University of Toronto. He has served as Scholar-in-Residence in many communities in North America and Europe. Michael has published *PASSAGES: Text and Transformation in the Parasha* and, most recently, *Joshua: The Challenge of the Promised Land*. He lives in Alon Shevut with his wife Rivka and their five children.

Alex Israel



Rabbi Alex Israel has a BSc from the London School of Economics, a PGCE from London's Institute of Education and is working on a MA in Talmud at Bar-Ilan University. He studied and taught at Yeshivat Har Etzion Advanced Talmudic College and received rabbinic ordination from the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. Alex has taught at Midreshet Harova, Midreshet Lindenbaum and Yeshivat Eretz Hatzvi. He is active in the Tzohar Movement, podcasts at <http://kmtt.libsyn.com/>, and sends weekly Parsha emails to hundreds of readers globally. Alex is the Director of Community Education and the Summer Program at Pardes, in addition to teaching a number of classes in Tanakh.



Judy Klitsner



Judy Klitsner is a senior lecturer in Bible at Pardes, where she has educated a generation of students, many of whom now serve as educators and heads of school in locations throughout the Jewish world. A student of the great Bible teacher Nechama Leibowitz, Judy weaves together traditional exegesis, modern scholarship and her own original interpretations that are informed by close readings of the text. Judy is a popular international speaker whose teaching style is accessible, interactive and text-based, and she is particularly fond of uncovering the “vibrant conversation” that takes place between the Bible’s parallel stories. Judy is the author of *Subversive Sequels in the Bible: How Biblical Stories Mine and Undermine Each Other*, which received a National Jewish book award. The book has recently been released in Hebrew. Judy is founding board chair of Sacred Spaces, an organization that seeks systemically to address abuses of power in Jewish institutions.

Sefi Kraut



Sefi Kraut grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio, and then moved to New York during her high school years. She earned a BA in History at Stern College, completed a teaching fellowship at the Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik Institute in Boston, and taught middle school Tanakh at Yavneh Academy in NJ for eight years. She moved to Jerusalem in August 2013 and went on to teach Tanakh to post-high school students in Midreshet Lindenbaum and Midreshet Moriah, as well as becoming the assistant director of the Tikvah Overseas Seminars program. Since 2017, Sefi has joined the faculty of the Pardes Center for Jewish Educators (PCJE) and is the Educational Director for the Mahloket Matters project at Pardes. She also teaches in the Pardes summer program and the community education programs.

Howard Markose



Howard teaches Bible and Biblical Hebrew at Pardes. He was born and raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Howard received his rabbinical ordination in 1984 from the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. Howard lived in Toronto for ten years from 1984-1994 at which time he served as assistant rabbi at Adatah Israel Congregation and rabbi at Shaar Shalom Synagogue. He and his family made Aliyah in 1994 and after seven years as rabbi of Kehilat Moreshet Avraham in Jerusalem, he became the Director of Education for the Young Judea Year Course. He received his PhD in Bible at Bar-Ilan University in January 2016. Howard conducts specialized Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies for families from North America who are visiting Israel.

Leon Morris



Leon is the President of Pardes, coming from the Shalom Hartman Institute where he was Vice President for North American programs in Israel and is on the faculty of Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion. Leon made aliyah with his family in 2014, after serving as the rabbi of Temple Adas Israel in Sag Harbor, NY. He was the founding director of the Skirball Center for Adult Jewish Learning at Temple Emanu-El (now the Temple Emanu-El Streicker Center) in Manhattan. Ordained from Hebrew Union College in 1997 where he was a Wexner Graduate Fellow, he has worked extensively with the Jewish community of India, beginning in 1990 when he served as a Jewish Service Corps volunteer for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. He was also a Mandel Jerusalem Fellow. Leon has taught at Orthodox, Conservative and Reform institutions and is a regular contributor to the Jewish, US and Israeli press. He is an editor of the new Reform High Holy Day machzor, *Mishkan HaNefesh*, and his essay 'Longing to Hear Again' was published in Jewish Theology in Our Time.



Tovah Leah Nachmani



Tovah Leah Nachmani has been teaching at Pardes for 16 years in the Summer Program and eight years as a full-time faculty member. She holds a BA in Near Eastern Language and Literature and Religious Studies from Indiana University and a Teaching Certificate in Tanach and Jewish Thought from the Michlelet Herzog Seminary in Gush Etzion. She has written and guided experiential learning programs for mothers and their daughters of Bat Mitzvah age at the Women's Beit Midrash in Efrat, where she previously taught Prayer and Jewish Thought. Tovah Leah was a Jewish educator and program director for many years, together with her husband Gabi, for Livnot U'Lehibanot in Tzfat and Jerusalem. They co-authored the widely-used song book "*Zemirot from Livnot*".

Leah Rosenthal



Leah has a BA in Talmud and Jewish Philosophy and an MA in Jewish Education, both from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. She has been teaching Talmud at Pardes for thirty years and is one of Pardes' most popular teachers. She combines her teaching at Pardes with teaching at the nearby Pelech High School for Girls and raising, with her husband, their five children.

Meir Schweiger



Rabbi Meir Schweiger received his BA (Mathematics) from City College of New York and his MEd in Teaching Bible from the Herzog College in Gush Etzion. His advanced Jewish Studies were done in Yeshiva University, Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh, and Yeshivat Har Etzion. His rabbinic ordination is from Rav Zalman Nechemiah Goldberg, a judge on the Jerusalem Rabbinical Court. Meir is one of the most influential teachers at Pardes, teaching full-time for the past 42 years. He has taught Chumash, Mishnah, Talmud, Halakhah, Siddur and Ethics. In addition to teaching, Meir has been responsible for the "affective" side of Pardes, coordinating and supervising *tefillot* (prayer), *tiyulim* (hikes), *Shabbatonim*, and pre-holiday *yemei iyun* (full-day study programs). For 10 years, Meir was Director of the Fellows' Program, for returning second year students, and he has been the Educational Director of the Executive Learning Seminar, for the past 16 years.



Yiscah Smith



Yiscah is a Jewish educator, spiritual activist and published author who addresses the spiritual practice of encountering the Divine spark within, the foundation of authentic living. She employs her personal story of the joys and struggles with her spirituality, Jewish tradition and commitment to authentic living. As a spiritual trailblazer, she exemplifies what it means to carve one's own path: understanding one's inner being and cultivating the integrity to remaining faithful to that understanding, unapologetically. Yiscah encourages, ennobles and empowers others to do the same. Yiscah is adjunct faculty and teaches Jewish meditative practice and spiritual texts at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies and in her home in Jerusalem. She provides as well spiritual mentoring to individuals seeking an awareness of the Divine spark within. Yiscah is also a very popular, public speaker, both in Israel and abroad.

GUEST SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY

Natan Sharansky



Natan Sharansky, a famed Soviet prisoner of conscience, immigrated to Israel in 1986 after nine years in labor camps and months of hunger strikes. A child chess prodigy, he kept himself sane in solitary confinement by playing chess in his mind. In Israel he became involved in politics representing the millions of Jews from the former Soviet Union who followed him there after the fall of Communism. From 1996-2005, Natan served as Minister as well as Deputy Prime Minister in four successive Israeli governments. In November 2006, he resigned from the Israeli Knesset and assumed the position of Chairman of Adelson Institute for Strategic Studies at the Shalem Center in Jerusalem. In June 2009, he was elected Chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel. He was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 1986 and the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2006. He has continued to lead human rights efforts both through his writings as well as public activities. Natan was very involved in efforts to secure a compromise for an egalitarian plaza at the Western Wall, and he also called for wider recognition by the Israeli Chief Rabbinate of conversions done by rabbis outside the Jewish state. He has outlined his experiences and ideas in three books that have each made a mark. "Fear No Evil," his memoir of the fight for Soviet Jewish emigration, his human rights work alongside Andrei Sakharov and his survival in the prison camps, became an international bestseller. "The Case for Democracy," where he sets out a diplomatic philosophy gleaned from his intimate understanding of totalitarianism, was cited by world leaders; and in "Defending Identity," he explores the tensions between politics and culture that have leaped to the forefront of European politics.