

Pardes Winter Break Learning Intensive

Pardes faculty bios available [here](#).

Guest teacher bios included with class description.

Schedule & Session Descriptions

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 25TH

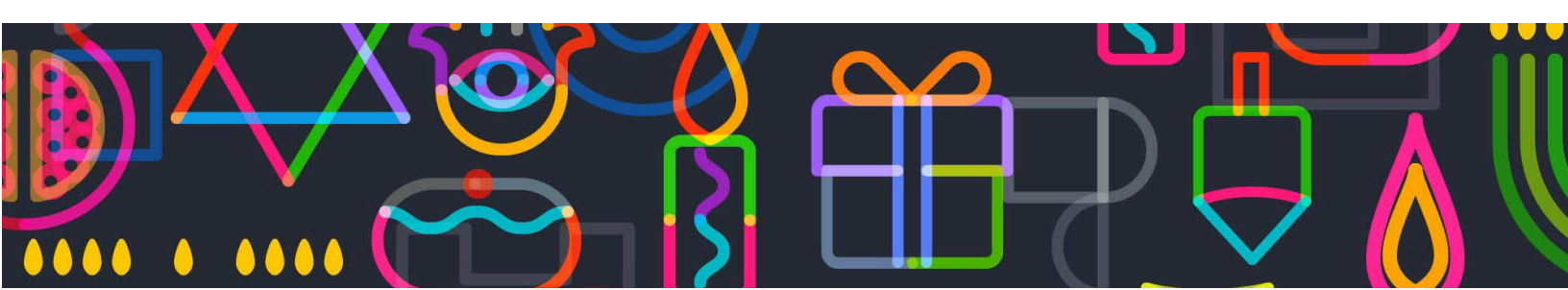
8:45-9:00 am: WELCOME / BREAKFAST PASTRIES

9:00-9:45 am: OPENING SESSION

A Fine Balance: The Tensions Inherent in Hanukkah and in Us

Leon Morris

Hanukkah is a holiday marked by values in tension with one another. It celebrates the importance of Jewish distinctiveness and a resistance to assimilation, even as it paves the way for a Judaism suffused in Greco-Roman culture. It is a celebration of physical strength and spiritual power. It is about Jewish national unity and divisions among Jews themselves. Hanukkah's centrality in the diaspora reveals the way it masquerades as a Jewish Christmas, while in Israel it underscores the importance of Jewish independence. It is about miracles and human agency. How might we live inside these tensions to develop more complex notions of what it means to be a Jew in the 21st century?



10:00 am-12:00 pm: TEXT SESSION I

Please select a class based on your level of experience with text study:

Curious Elements of Hanukkah in Law and Tradition

Howard Markose

INTRODUCTORY

Are women obligated to light the Hanukkah candles? Why is there a tradition to eat cheese on Hanukkah? There is?! Our shiur will explore some obscure rabbinic texts that address a few of the observances that have been associated with Hanukkah over the years.

From Hanukkah to October 7: *Ba-yamim Ha-hem Ba-z'man Ha-zeh*

Judy Klitsner

LOWER INTERMEDIATE

We will investigate the "anti-semitic" underpinnings of the Hanukkah story, and will note the disturbing, enduring, relevance of these tropes from the pages of the Bible up until our current post Oct. 7 reality. In our explorations, we will consult biblical passages that suggest possible responses to the age-old problem of Jew hatred.

The Triumph of Hanukkah: by Sword or by Splendor?

Michael Hattin

UPPER INTERMEDIATE

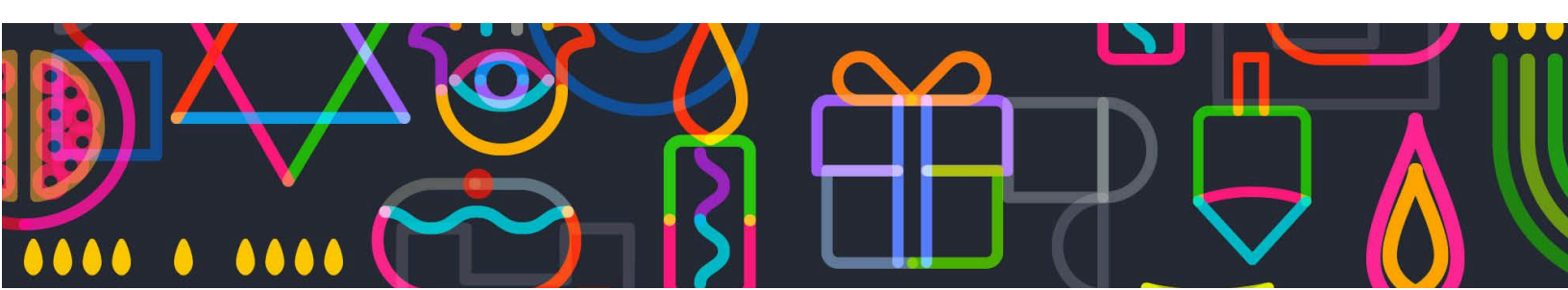
What, exactly, do we celebrate on Hanukkah? The military victory of the Hasmoneans over the Syrian Greeks? The miracle of the cruse of oil that kept the Temple menorah burning brightly? Something else? We will consider various sources on the matter in an attempt to get to the essence of the holiday.

The Hanukkah Story: Historical Fiction or Spiritual Narrative?

Nechama Goldman Barash

ADVANCED

In this class we will explore the origin of the classic Hanukkah story – the oil that burned for eight days - and its place in our traditional holiday narrative. Along the way we will study early rabbinic texts that illuminate the reasons why the rabbis were so intent on having a holiday of light at a time of darkness.



12:00-1:15 pm:

LUNCH BREAK (OPTIONAL FALAFEL EXPEDITION) / MINCHA

1:15-2:30 pm: ELECTIVES

Creative Writing Workshop: Finding Light in Darkness and Darkness in Light

Yoni Hammer-Kossoy

In this generative workshop we will explore the themes of light and darkness and how they work together to evoke beauty, complexity, and emotional depth in our writing. No previous workshop experience is required and all forms of writing are welcome and encouraged.

*Yoni Hammer-Kossoy is a poet, translator, and educator, whose writing appears in numerous international journals and anthologies. A graduate of the Shaindy Rudoff program in Creative Writing at Bar Ilan University and winner of the 2020 Andrea Moriah Prize in Poetry, Yoni's first poetry collection, *The Book of Noah*, was published in 2023 by Grayson Books. Originally from New York, Yoni has lived in Israel with his family since 1999.*

Coloring in the Light: Art Beit Midrash

David Ratz

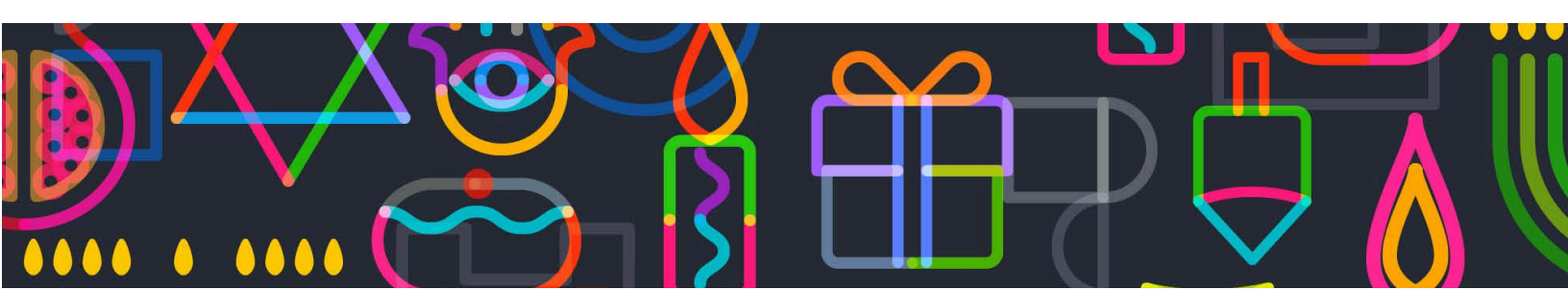
Join Pardes experiential education student David Ratz for an art-making Beit Midrash centered around Hanukkah themes. No experience necessary - all are welcome!

David Ratz is a Jewish educator with a passion for community building. He has worked internationally as a professional chef, and as a Hillel professional at the Bronfman Center for Jewish Life at NYU, creating and facilitating meaningful programs around Israel, Judaism, and art. He is also a former resident of Moishe House UWS in Manhattan, where he served and connected with hundreds. In his free time, David creates art, drawing on inspiration from Israel and Judaism. <https://www.davidratzart.com/>

History is in the Eye of the Beholder

Rafael Jonathan Polisuk

What was the Hanukkah miracle? It depends who you ask. Together, we will delve into both Rabbinic sources as well as descriptions in the apocryphal Book of the Maccabees, exploring different perspectives on this holiday and its meaning in Jewish history.



2:45-4:15 pm: TEXT SESSION II

Classes are open to all levels

Pirsumei Nissa (Publicizing Miracles): What's our Obligation?

Daniel Reifman

Hanukkah candle lighting is designed to be a public act, with "*pirsum hanes*" (publicizing the miracle) at the heart of the mitzvah. By examining the halakhot of *where, when and how* to light candles, we'll raise larger questions about the role of the individual, family and community in preserving memory and in communicating powerful messages to those around us.

The Power of the Candle

Nechama Goldman Barash

In addition to Hanukkah, candles are ever present in Jewish tradition and practice throughout the year, most notably in the Shabbat candles but also in the candles lit to accompany a bride and groom down the aisle and finally, to commemorate loss – during shiva (seven day mourning process) and the *yahrzeit* (anniversary) of a loved one. What is the power of the candle and what does it symbolize for Jewish households around the world? We will explore rabbinic and Hassidic texts to learn about the connection between the flame of the candle and the human soul.

Bright Embers Among the Ashes: Recovering the Temple Ideal

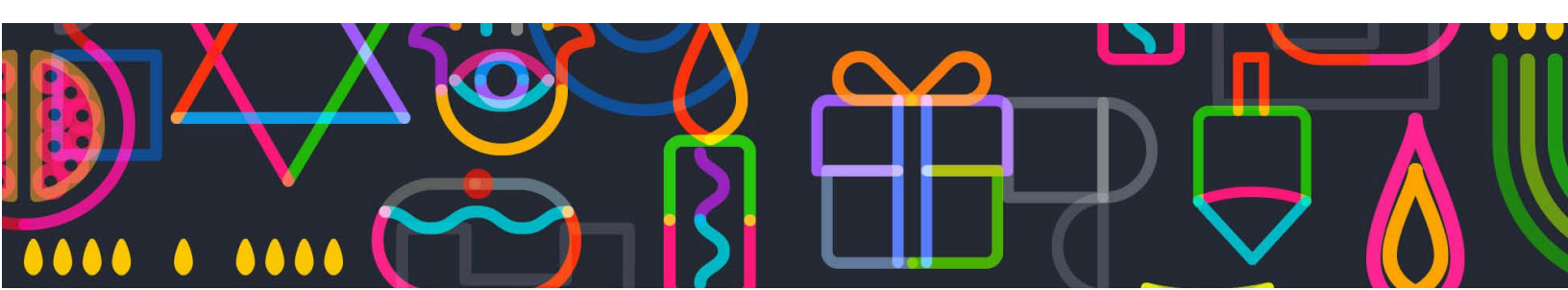
Michael Hattin

In ancient Israel, the Temple in Jerusalem stood at the center of Jewish identity and the kindling of the menorah was an integral part of its daily ritual. Two thousand years after its destruction, the memory of the Temple still looms large in our tradition, and its location continues to occupy the center of the world's attention. Guided by the light of the menorah, we will attempt a "textual excavation" of the Temple, peeling back some of the architectural and ritual layers to reveal its deeper symbolism and its continued meaning for us today.

Beyond "Dreidel, Dreidel": Hanukkah Songs with a Contemporary Sound

David Levin-Kruss

In this session, we will explore and analyze how modern Israeli and international artists blend genres and use humor to give Hanukkah a global appeal and broaden its meaning.



4:30-5:30 pm: CANDLE LIGHTING + MUSIC

Interactive Hanukkah experience led by Pardes Experiential Education students

5:30-6:45 pm: FESTIVE COMMUNAL DINNER

7:00-9:00 pm: OPTIONAL SHUK OUTING (donuts + drinks)

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 26TH

9:00-11:00 am: TEXT SESSION I

Please select a class based on your level of experience with text study:

The Miracle of Sovereignty: Maimonides on Hanukkah

Zvi Hirschfield

INTRODUCTORY

We will explore how Maimonides connected the political significance of the famous military victory of Hanukkah to the religious meaning of the holy day.

“Mi l’Adonai - Elai!”: Religious Passion and Holy Battles

Leah Rosenthal

LOWER INTERMEDIATE

The verse “Who is for God – to me!” first appears following the sin of the Golden Calf in the book of Shmot (Exodus 32:17) as Moses calls for those loyal to God to gather against those within the Jewish nation who committed this sin of idolatry. According to some traditions, these words were also used by Matityahu to rally the Maccabees and their supporters to fight against the Greeks and the Hellenist Jews who adopted some of the foreign Greek practices of the times. This call has since evoked the image of battles waged in the name of God against those seen as disloyal to God’s will. In this session, we will study a Talmudic text which considers acts of violence motivated by devotion to God, and consider conclusions regarding Rabbinic Judaism’s attitude to holy wars and religious passions.



Nes Gadol: Did a Great Miracle Happen Here?

Tovah Leah Nachmani

UPPER INTERMEDIATE

The Tanakh, the Talmud and the words of our Sages are filled with all kinds of supernatural events. Must a thinking person believe in the miracles of our tradition? Are there miracles in the present? What if a Jew doesn't believe in miracles? We will unpack three approaches to Miracles, what they symbolize and what they can mean for our lives, through the lenses of Tanakh, Rabbinic and some modern Jewish traditions.

Holy Candles! Or are they...?

Daniel Reifman

ADVANCED

While we declare almost reflexively every night of Hanukkah in “haneirot halalu” that our holiday lights are holy, the implications are not universally agreed upon, and it might even be a debate as to whether they really have any special status at all. We'll consider both what the holiness of נרות חנוכה means on a practical level, and why נרות חנוכה would be special in this regard.

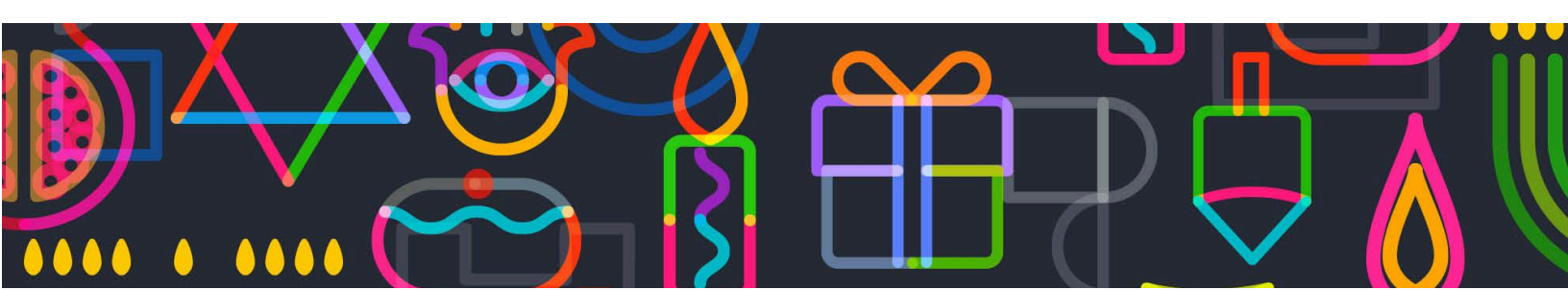
Bringing the Inside Out — The Story of Hanukkah as Told by Tractate Shabbat

Rahel Berkovits

KOLLEL (UPPER ADVANCED)

Why do we light Hanukkah candles and what do they symbolize? We all know the story of the miraculous flask of oil that burned for eight days, but is that the whole story? In this shiur we will examine and analyze the meta- themes and literary structure of the section in Tractate Shabbat in which the laws of Hanukkah are taught. We will unpack what Hazal think the Hanukkah candles represent and which miracle we are in fact publicizing, thus adding a new layer to our understanding of this well-known, beloved and powerful mitzvah.

[NOTE: Open to current Kollel students and experienced learners comfortable with texts in Hebrew and Aramaic. An “all levels” version of this session will be offered in the afternoon.]



11:15 am-12:15 pm: KEYNOTE: REKINDLING THE LIGHTS

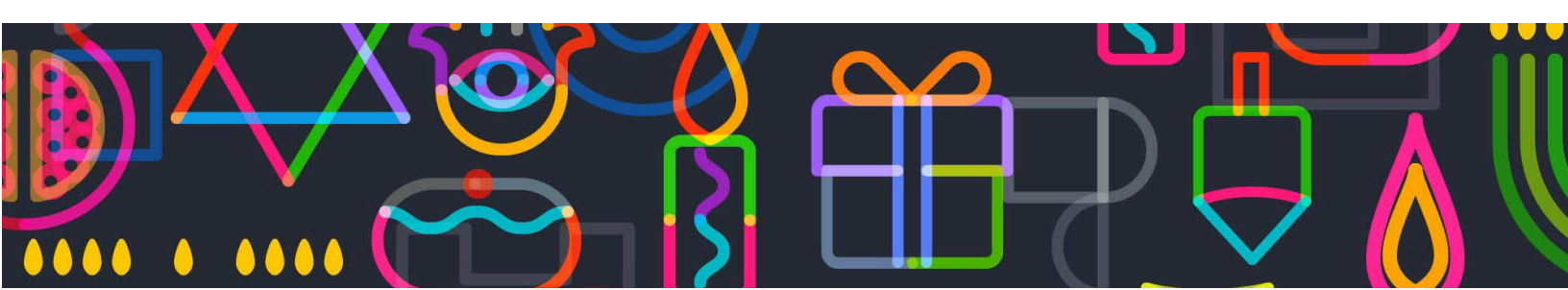
Reflections on our current reality and sparks for a brighter future

with Meredith Rothbart, *Amal-Tikva* & Galit Sagie, *Fourth Quarter (HaRivon HaRevi'i)*
Moderated by Nechama Goldman Barash

Meredith Rothbart is the co-founder and CEO of Amal-Tikva, a Jerusalem-based organization seeking to lay the foundations for a more peaceful reality. She brings almost 15 years of leadership experience with Israeli and Palestinian NGOs, including as director of Kids4Peace Jerusalem. Meredith holds an MA from Hebrew University in Community Development, and has addressed Congress, the White House and the UN Security Council on grassroots peacebuilding efforts. She lives in Jerusalem with her husband and four giggly children.

Galit Sagie was a key member of the Joint-Israel, Israel's leading innovator of social services, for over 20 years; in the last 12 years she served as the Joint's Director of Planning and Strategy. Today she is a strategy and management consultant for organizations in the social arena – non-profit, philanthropic and government. She specializes in cross-sector partnerships, strategy building and implementation, operating model design and relations between boards and professional staff. She also teaches at the Hebrew University's program for Non-Profit Management. Galit serves on the board of several leading non-profit organizations and is a volunteer in the Fourth Quarter movement.

12:15-1:30 pm: COMMUNITY LUNCH / MINCHA



1:30-3:00 pm: TEXT SESSION II

Classes are open to all levels

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In Praise of Darkness, Forgetfulness and Division: Pahad Yitzhak Hannukah 3

Meesh Hammer-Kossov

Rav Yitzhak Hutner, the Pahad Yitzhak, is one of my favorite contemporary thinkers. Come learn why Hanukkah is an opportunity to celebrate forgetfulness and disagreement.

Menorah and Olive Tree: Zechariah's Vision and our National Symbols

Amirit Rosen

What is the connection between the vision of the Prophet Zechariah and Israel's national symbol? What links the Menorah, the light and the olive tree, and what might this teach us regarding our hopes and awareness of what fuels us spiritually?

3:15-4:00 pm: CLOSING SESSION + REFLECTIONS / Aviva Lauer

4:00-4:20 pm: SUFGANIYOT AND SCHMOOZING

4:30-5:00 pm: OPTIONAL VOLUNTEERING

Visit with elderly nursing home residents – candle lighting and singing!