



THE TORAH CANNOT BE ACQUIRED EXCEPT IN FELLOWSHIP

אֵין הַתּוֹרָה נִקְנִית אֶלָּא בְּ

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## *National Havurah Committee's Winter Retreat in New England:*

**Registration is now open!** ([Download the registration form](#))

**Note - special reduced fees for students and 20's!**

(also, please note: participants from the 413 Area Code and southern Vermont may qualify for 50% off thanks to a Jewish Family Camp grant available from the **Harold Grinspoon Foundation**. Visit: <https://hgf.org/grants-awards/jewish-family-camps>)

**December 15-17, 2023** (Friday afternoon through lunch on Sunday)

in scenic western Mass. at **Camp Ramah, Palmer, MA**

**(see course descriptions, below)**



Light Shabbat Candles, and celebrate a vibrant musical *Kabbalat Shabbat* service to begin the weekend. Friday evening continues with dinner, singing, and study sessions.

On Saturday and Sunday, take time for spirited prayer, or walk in the woods or by the lake, study accessible texts, and apply Jewish values to issues of social justice. Learn and sing new songs, stretch your body and your mind.

Courses are scheduled on Friday night, Saturday afternoon and evening, and Sunday morning. With many options, there's something for everyone (*see details below*).

Children's Program, for kids between ages 2 and 12, is provided by experienced personnel. Special Judaic programming for ages 6-12. Post-Bar/Bat Mitzvah children are also invited to attend the adult sessions.

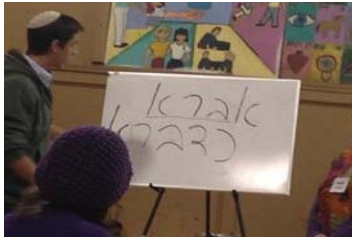
*Camp Ramah in New England is located in Palmer, MA, a few*



*miles  
north of exit 8 off of the Mass Pike, about an hour from either  
Boston  
or Hartford, CT, 90 minutes from Albany, NY or Providence, RI,  
and 3 hours from New York City.*



*The site includes a beautiful lakefront and wooded walking paths.  
There are covered and open outdoor assembly areas, informal  
lounges, seminar rooms, a beit midrash complex,  
a well-stocked Judaic library, and a synagogue.*



*Accommodations are simple, uncrowded, comfortable, and fully winterized.*

*Single rooms and limited "motel-style" suites are available.*

*Meals are kosher, with vegetarian options.*



### **[Download the registration form!](#)**

*email us to let us know if you'd like to help organize and/or spread the news!: [ne-retreat@havurah.org](mailto:ne-retreat@havurah.org)*

**Winter Retreat course summary: [Download the registration form](#)**

**V'ZOT HaTORAH....."and this is the Torah"..... Oh yeah?  
(Solomon Mowshowitz)**

In shul we raise the Torah and declare: "This is the very Torah that Moses placed before the Children of Israel.." However, according to normative rabbinic tradition, that Torah may have been different from the Torah we have today, both in form and in content.

**Kissing in the Synagogue  
(Solomon Mowshowitz)**

Kissing is one of the nonverbal activities of Jewish prayer, along with bowing, "shocheling," marching, turning, jumping and lots of other synagogue choreography. We'll discuss what we kiss in schul, when and why. Time permitting, we might get to some of the other things we do with our bodies during prayer besides talking and singing in Hebrew.

**Solomon Mowshowitz** (*Mosh*) is a molecular biologist, a past NHC Chair, and long-time NHC teacher.

## Bible stories you didn't learn in Sunday school

**(Ronnie Levin)**

Blood, sex, murder, incest, and risqué Jewish texts. We will read several totally compromising texts from the Torah and the Prophets. English versions will be provided, and Hebrew knowledge is not required.

## Who's the God of our prayers?

**(Ronnie Levin)**

Many of us reject the notion of god as an old man with a white beard. Is that who's described in our prayers? We will explore the god portrayed in 3 t'fillot from our Shabbat morning ("shacharit") service.

**Ronnie Levin** holds a graduate degree in Bible and Tefilah, and has been a popular Havurah teacher for years.

## Revelation in the Café: God-Sightings in the poetry of Lea Goldberg and Yehuda Amichai

**(Miriam Rosalyn Diamond)**

Where would you expect to encounter the Divine? Join us to collaboratively explore and discuss how acclaimed Israeli poets Goldberg and Amichai envisioned viewing God in everyday places.

## Tradition + Art + History = Drama: A participatory play reading and discussion

### about the Birds' Head Haggadah

**(Miriam Rosalyn Diamond)**

The Birds' Head illustrated Haggadah, created over 700 years ago, is a fascinating text with an intriguing story. We will explore the unusual renderings and collaboratively read an original short play about this controversial object. Where do historically significant ritual items belong in the 21st century?

**Dr. Miriam Rosalyn Diamond** is an educator, writer, and Jewish music DJ who enjoys fostering engagement and reflection through the arts.

## The Yiddish Landscape Today

**(Dalia Wolfson)**

What's being published in Yiddish today? Where are the borders of Yiddishland? Who, really, is a Yiddishist? Where can I learn Yiddish this winter? In this broad-ranging lecture, we'll listen to contemporary Yiddish music, go on a 'tour' of modern Yiddish-speaking communities and get a *geshmak* (a taste) of the state of Yiddish today.

## Yiddish Pulp Fiction ("Shund"): Guilty Pleasures from the Archives

**(Dalia Wolfson)**

Know the “Yinglish” expression of "it's a shandeh" (scandal)? Take a peek into the romantic, racy world of "shund," or so-called "trash" entertainment (historically thought to be a "shandeh" kind of genre!), and see what there was to be so embarrassed (or excited) about. Can romance and drama ever be high-falutin'? What are the latest views on shund in fiction? Let's explore together.

*Dalia Wolfson is a PhD candidate in Comparative Literature at Harvard University. She is editor of Texts and Translations at the journal In geveb, and teaches Yiddish language and literature in the Boston area. Dalia's big pandemic hobby accomplishment was getting three comics published in the Yiddish version of the Forward.*

"And Pharaoh dreamed".... Do we really believe dreams provide spiritual guidance?  
(Carl Woolf)

We will discuss dreams based on this-week's Torah portion which describes Joseph interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, including recalling or inventing some dreams, and then interpreting them as spiritual lessons.

So you want to leyn (ritually chant) some Psalms?  
(Carl Woolf)

We will use mimetic call-response to leyn some familiar Psalms, phrase by phrase, using Carl's recently developed system for interpreting the cantillation-marks

*Carl Woolf is a software engineer, was recently ordained as a Rabbi by ALEPH, as well as continuing to make music.*

Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers): The Big Picture  
(Joe Rosenstein)

We will look at some of the major themes of Pirkei Avot, which are often overlooked when Pirkei Avot is studied in order, one mishnah (section) after another, because Pirkei Avot is not organized thematically. We will discuss groups of sections (mishnayot) dealing with each theme. All are welcome to participate, those who have already studied Pirkei Avot and those who have never heard of it.

The Ethics in "Ethics of the Fathers"  
(Joe Rosenstein)

In this session, we will read and discuss a list of ethical principles that we can extract from the teachings in Pirkei Avot. We will review the entire list and then focus on several groups of ethical principles, including discussion of how we can implement those ethical principles into our own lives.

*Joe Rosenstein is a retired professor of mathematics who has been teaching at NHC institutes and retreats for many years. In addition to publishing the widely used Siddur Eit Ratzon and Machzor Eit Ratzon, he has recently published "Reflections on Pirkei Avot: Not Just What My Rebbe Taught Me."*

Extraordinary Letters in Our Torah Scrolls

*(Deborah B. Thompson)*

Have you ever seen a Double Hebrew letter “Pei”? An upside down final-Nun? What about a Curled Yud, or a Broken Vav? Every Torah scroll contains dozens to hundreds of these “Otiot Meshunot,” or Extraordinary Letters, which teach incredible and timeless lessons. These visual elements of the Torah text are hidden in plain sight, yet they speak to those who listen. Come learn Masorah (scribal tradition) utilizing primary sources such as photos of Torah scrolls dating from the 12th - 21st centuries, alongside the relevant commentaries of Maimonides, the Baal HaTurim, and other commentators, to revive these almost forgotten examples of Heavenly scribal art.

## Mother, Queen, Wife, Judge: The Seven Prophetesses of the Torah

*(Deborah B. Thompson)*

Did you know that, according to the Talmud, seven out of the 55 prophets in our Torah are women? They are: Sarah, Miriam, Devorah, Hannah, Avigail, Huldah, and Esther. Who were these great women, and what can we learn from them? Come dedicate time to this week of prophetesses and the ocean of wisdom, midrash, aggadah, and halakhah that surround each toweringly humble figure.

**Deborah B. Thompson** is a scholar of Jewish Art, Jewish History, and Masorah with degrees from Brandeis and The Jewish Theological Seminary. She is currently pursuing her doctorate at Harvard University.

## Why is this word in the Kaddish?

*(Aliza Arzt)*

Kaddish is a prayer we say in praise of God. But in addition to all the words of praise and blessing used in the Kaddish the word "nechemata" ("consolation") is also used. Why is this anomalous word there, and what can we learn from it? Hint: it's not because it's said by mourners.

## Using Liturgy for Tikkun Olam (repairing the world)

*(Aliza Arzt)*

This session will explore some examples of liturgy changes in the Havurat Shalom Siddur that modify and/or remove images of violence and retribution from our liturgy and offer powerful alternatives.

*Aliza Arzt is a long-time member of Havurat Shalom in Somerville, MA, and teacher at NHC retreats. She loves chasing Hebrew roots through the Tanach (Bible) and Midrash (Rabbinics) and sharing the results.*

## What Happens When You Die?

**(Sue Gulack)**

Judaism, of course has more than one answer to what we believe happens after we die. What we believe should shape how we live our lives. Come consider the different options

and think about what you believe, along with a Rabbi who regularly discusses "What Happens When You Die" with Incarcerated Individuals in NY State prisons.

### Needle Felted Mizrach or Challah Cover

(Sue Gulack)

Come learn the easy and meditative craft of needle felting; joining colored wool onto a white background to make a solid fabric. Sue will bring needles, wool and wool felt and bandaids. There will be a \$5 fee for materials. You will be able to take home several felting needles and extra roving to finish your piece.

*Sue Gulack is chair of the NHC. She is a Rabbi and chaplain from Albany, NY, and has been exploring the spiritual, intellectual, emotional and physical worlds through prayer and study, art and music for a long time.*

### To Bend the Knee and Bless: a Somatic Exploration of Bowing in Prayer

(Josh Shalem Schreiber)

The root of the Hebrew word for "blessing" [בִּרְכָה] also means knee, suggesting that the origin of this fundamental building block of Jewish prayer is somatic -- a physical action, as much as verbal one. In this session we will look at a few texts on movement and bowing in our tradition, and then explore how we might make the physical action of bowing meaningful in our own prayer practice.

### The Hidden Miracle of Hanukkah

(Josh Shalem Schreiber)

The origin of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev's Magnum Opus the *Kedushat Levi* was a small collection of teachings around the miracles of Purim and Hanukkah. We will look at a few teachings from this part of the book, asking ourselves why he chose to focus on these relatively minor holidays and their "hidden miracles," and what we can learn for our own lives from the Berditchever's understanding of the miraculous.

### Saturday Night Entertainment

...features a talent show, group singing led by **Josh Shalem Schreiber**, and joined by our musical attendees in an open-ended jam session. Bring copies of Rise Up Singing!

*Josh Shalem Schreiber is a long-term havurahnik, and an active member of Havurat Shalom in Somerville, MA; a popular NHC teacher, a certified teacher of the Feldenkrais Method® of Somatic Education, a performing musician, and a recently ordained Rabbi by ALEPH.*

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*(For more information, [click here](#).)*

Ilana Teitel, Programs Director  
Alyse Portera, Operations Director

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The National Havurah Committee is a network of diverse individuals and communities dedicated to Jewish living and learning, community building, and tikkun olam (repairing the world). Since the 1970s, the NHC Summer Institute has been bringing together Jews from across North America to envision a joyful grassroots Judaism and provide the tools to help them create empowered Jewish lives and communities. The NHC is a nondenominational, multigenerational, egalitarian, and volunteer-run organization.