



THE TORAH CANNOT BE ACQUIRED EXCEPT IN FELLOWSHIP

אֵין הַתּוֹרָה נִקְנִית אֶלָּא בַּחֲבֵרָה

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National Havurah Committee's Winter Weekend 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 20-22, 2024 (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 63 (formerly "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

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

Was Humanity Worth God's Creative Efforts? Two (And Maybe More!) Perspectives From The Ancient Rabbis.

(Dan Ornstein)

The setting is heaven just before the sixth day of creation, and we have ringside seats to some heated arguments between God and God's celestial servants about the value and purpose of humanity. Join in this exciting imaginative exploration from rabbinic literature about God's relationships with us.

Eight To One Or One To Eight? A Deeper Dive Into The Classic Debate About Lighting Hanukkah Candles

(Dan Ornstein)

With Hanukkah approaching, we'll briefly look at the Talmudic argument over how many

candles we light each night of the holiday. We'll also explore a fascinating Hasidic discussion of the deeper spiritual meaning of this debate, one that can help us think more creatively about the role that every person could play in bringing light to our darkened world.

Dan Ornstein is the rabbi of Congregation Ohav Shalom in Albany, NY. He's the author of *Cain v Abel: A Jewish Courtroom Drama* (2020, JPS). You can check out his other writings at www.danornstein.com

Queering Judaism: Homosexuality in Jewish Tradition

(Dale Rosenberg)

What do classic and medieval Rabbinic texts tell us about sexuality, homosexuality and gender? How did the societies in which Jews previously lived affect their views of sexuality, and how do they compare to modern views of sexuality and sexual behavior?

American Jews and Queer Identities

(Dale Rosenberg)

What is life like now for gay and lesbian Jews in the United States? Which Jewish groups and organizations have been more and which less inclusive? How have Jewish tradition, ethics, and theology informed their positions, and how is this unfolding.

Dale Rosenberg is a Jewish Educator, a lesbian mother of three children, and a rebbitzin. Dale lives in Oak Ridge, TN with her wife, Rabbi Ahuvah Loewenthal, who is the spiritual director of the Jewish Congregation of Oak Ridge.

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.

Midrash within the Siddur

(Ronnie Levin)

The tefillot in the Siddur have evolved and continue to evolve including by reusing and reinterpreting other prayers. We will look at several tefillot that (re)use other tefillot midrashically. English/Hebrew texts will be provided.

Ronnie Levin holds a graduate degree in Bible and Tefilah, and has been a popular Havurah teacher for years. According to *Time Magazine* (2024), Ronnie is also among the 100 most influential global health leaders.

LOVE (?) YOUR (?) NEIGHBOR (?) AS (?) YOURSELF(?)

(Amy Shevitz)

A reading of the commandment based on the approach of the iconic Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig.

Amy Shevitz is a Jewish historian and retired professor of Religious Studies. She's been involved with the NHC winter retreat since it first began.

If Your Friend Calls You a Donkey: Rabbinical perspectives on friendship (Miriam Rosalyn Diamond)

The early Rabbis had a lot to say about how to be a good friend. Join us in the newest installment of "What's Jewish about Friendship?" as we explore Talmudic insights on these important relationships.

Getting Older or Getting Better? Aging in the poetry of Lea Goldberg and Yehuda Amichai (Miriam Rosalyn Diamond)

Join us to explore the concept of maturation as presented these classic Israeli poets' verses. We will read poems in the original Hebrew as well as English translation.

Dr. Miriam Rosalyn Diamond is an educator, writer, and friend. She enjoys engaging learners ages 5 to 100 through the arts, games, lively discussions, and reflection.

Bowing: Look Who's Nothing (Solomon Mowshowitz)

If you don't live in a bowing culture – and we don't – bowing may seem weird to you. However, there's a lot of bowing going on in schul. Come learn when and how to do it "correctly." Also, why do it at all?

Black Fire (Solomon Mowshowitz)

There are 304,805 letters in the Torah. Besides the standard letters with the strange crowns on them, there are oversized letters, miniscule ones, letters broken in half, and upside-down letters. What's up with that?

Solomon Mowshowitz is a recovering molecular biologist who loves learning and teaching Torah. He is also a past NHC Chair, and long-time NHC teacher.

Engaging with Hasidic-style Stories (two sessions) (Carl Woolf)

What makes a good, satisfying, homiletical (perhaps hasidic) story? We will hear and engage with some stories. (Also ones you may not have learned in Hebrew School!) Bring your own favorite if you want to share.

Carl Woolf was ordained as a Rabbi by ALEPH, and is a software engineer. He makes music, and has presented multiple times at NHC retreats.

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

In this course, we will talk about the various themes in Pirkei Avot. Since each teaching is unrelated to the previous and following teachings, the patterns are not always evident. They

will be the focus of this course and also of Joe's new book on "the big picture."

Talking About God

(Joe Rosenstein)

Do I believe in God? Do you? How do we understand God? How does reality interfere with our understandings? Come prepared to participate in this discussion of the variety of ways in which we understand God ... or don't.

Joe Rosenstein has taught at many NHC institutes and retreats. He is the author of Siddur Eit Ratzon and Machzor Eit Ratzon and, more recently, of "Reflections on Pirkei Avot" – all of which are available at joeroseinstein.com

A History of the Jews of Ukraine

(Judith Kummer)

With the current war in the Ukraine, many American Jews look back at family connections to this vast area in Eastern Europe. Please join us as we learn about the history of the Jews of Ukraine and examine some of the significant Jewish movements that originated in that area.

Vashti and Esther: a Feminist Perspective

(Judith Kummer)

"The book of Esther presents us with two very different images of female agency and role. How much choice did Vashti and Esther have in inhabiting these roles? And, where was God in relation to the somewhat assimilated Jewish community of Persia in Esther's time? We'll examine these and other questions about the book of Esther."

Rabbi Judy Kummer has served congregations in New York, New Jersey and the Washington DC area. For 18 years she served as executive director of the Jewish Chaplaincy Council of MA. She is a board-certified chaplain currently working in a spiritual care private practice in the Boston area, providing pastoral visits, eldercare programing and lifecycle events.

God, Jews, and Water

(Aliza Arzt)

Water is a very powerful biblical image, especially in the Psalms. We will look at some biblical texts that incorporate the varied interplay among God, Jews, and Water, and explore the different ways in which they relate.

Implementing an interactive inter-generational service

(Aliza Arzt)

For the last 4 years, Havurat Shalom has conducted weekly intergenerational services on Zoom. These interactive services focus on Hebrew language, learning prayers, and exploring related Jewish principles. This session will present the materials we use and discuss adapting this service to other formats and other types of communities.

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.

Golems, Shikshas, and Sex Workers, Oh My! Modern Jewish Romance in Print and on Screen

(Beth Schreiber)

Jewish romance is having a heyday! From the Hallmark Channel's Hanukkah film offerings, to Hulu's *Nobody Wants This*, to a plethora of books. From falling in love with a golem (maybe?) in *Magical Meet Cute* by Jean Meltzer; to deep explorations of what it means to be intimate, like *Weather Girl* by Rachel Lynn Solomon; to Xan West z'l's erotic novels peopled with poly, queer, fat, disabled, on-the-spectrum folx. In this session, get some advice for what to read next, bring a favorite modern Jewish romance to share, or just come and rant about the portrayal of Jewish women in modern media.

Beth Schreiber is a Jew by choice who's a sucker for a great love story.

Tales from Rebbe Nachman

(Sue Gulack)

We will review and examine stories from and about the Hassidic legend, Rebbe Nachman of Breslov, Ukraine.

Sunday morning craft: Dreidel Decorating

(Sue Gulack)

We will decorate blank wooden dreidels with permanent markers. (\$1 material fee per dreidel.)

Sue Gulack is chair of the NHC. She is a Rabbi and former prison 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.

Saturday Night Entertainment

...features a talent show, group singing and participation by our musical attendees in an open-ended jam session. Bring copies of Rise Up Singing!

HEALTH NOTE: *With respect to various pandemic and winter-illness concerns, our intent is to follow whatever Massachusetts and Camp Ramah guidelines are in force at the time of the retreat.*

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

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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.