



Community Midrasha of Durham/Chapel Hill

Fall 2009 Program Guide

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MIDRASH

Faculty Fall 2009



Rabbi Leah R. Berkowitz is the Assistant Rabbi at Judea Reform Congregation in Durham. She grew up in Broomall, PA, and earned her B.A. in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies and Journalism from Brandeis University. She was ordained in 2008 at Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, where she also earned masters' degrees in Hebrew Literature and Religious Education. During her studies at HUC-JIR, Rabbi Berkowitz served as a rabbinic intern at hospitals and Hillels, camps and congregations throughout the Northeast. She has had stories and essays published in *God: Jewish Choices in Struggling with the Ultimate*, *Jewish Women's Literary Annual*, and *Spirituality 101: The Indispensable Guide to Keeping- or Finding- Your Spiritual Life on Campus*, and also contributed to the creation of *The Torah: A Women's Commentary*. Rabbi Berkowitz is excited to be a part of the Midrasha team and the Jewish community in the Triangle. It is her goal as a Jewish professional to empower the members of this community to lead their best Jewish lives.



David Bernay recently moved to Durham after spending two years in Israel, where he completed an MA in Jewish History at Hebrew University. Originally from Upstate NY, David received an undergraduate degree in German from Middlebury College in Vermont. David is looking forward to connecting with the Jewish community in NC, and as an avid musician and concert-goer, he hopes to explore new musical offerings in the triangle area!

Rabbi Zalman and Yehudis Bluming - Rabbi Zalman is the Rabbi and Director of the Chabad of Durham/Chapel Hill. He grew up in Atlanta and enjoyed a diverse educational background studying in Manchester Eng. & Melbourne, Australia, Jerusalem, Israel & The Far East. His classes have been among the most popular classes in his 5 years thus far teaching at the Midrasha.



Yehudis is the co-director of the Chabad of Durham/Chapel Hill and has traveled around the country running various Chabad youth and teen programs. She's been a counselor, head counselor and the director for Jewish camps for teenagers and has been the teen program coordinator for a high school of 600 teens. She then ran a young adult-teen program for a year in Melbourne Australia.



Matt Diamond is the Director of the Community Midrasha. He recently helped found the North American Association of Community Hebrew High Schools - a network of 70 schools serving over 11,000 Jewish teens, and served on the Mazkirut and Programming Vaad for the CAJE 31 Jewish education conference.

Matt lived in Israel for 8 years where he worked for USY and NFTY, went to Hebrew U for graduate school in political science, and served in the IDF. He has taught "Israeli Politics" at Duke and has published several academic articles about Israel, the Middle East, and Jewish law.



Rachel Galper is a certified teacher and art educator, and is soon to receive s'micha as a maggid (Jewish inspirational speaker and storyteller) through renowned Jewish storyteller Yitzhak Buxbaum. Rachel currently teaches mixed media collage and assemblage, mural painting, story-based art, and basic storytelling through the Carrboro Arts Center, the Durham Arts Council, Carolina Friends School, the Durham/Chapel Hill Jewish Federation, Durham Parks and Recreation and Housing Authority, and several local libraries and K-12 schools throughout the Triangle. Rachel is the founder of the ongoing Storytellers for Healing Adult Story Circle in Durham, a volunteer doula and Reiki Master, and an occasional facilitator for a Jewish Meditation Group. She also serves as the art teacher for Temple Beth Or in Raleigh.

MIDRASHA



Rabbi Michael Goldman is the Rabbi for the Duke Hillel at the [Freeman Center for Jewish Life](#). Michael graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Russian from Reed College and his Master's Degree in Russian from Columbia University. He received his Rabbinical Ordination and his Master's in Jewish Philosophy from the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City. While pursuing ordination, Michael served as the Jewish Chaplain at Terence Cardinal Cooke Health Care Center in New York City, and as a congregational rabbi in Beacon, New York.

Rabbi Steven Kirschner was ordained by the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC) in June, 2004. He then served for two years as the Executive Director of the Hillel Foundation at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma, as well as two years as the rabbi of Congregation Bayt Shalom in Greenville, NC.

Prior to rabbinical school, Steve lived in Madison, Wisconsin, where he practiced law for 18 years. Rabbi Steve is an avid reader of science fiction and fantasy, and an enthusiastic fan of rock music, especially contemporary punk rock and emo, as well as contemporary jazz. He also loves movies, especially "The Lord of the Rings" series and the Harry Potter movies.

Ariel and David Krusch have both taught at Midrasha for several years. Ariel is studying for her MA in Education at UNC after graduating from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a B.A. in International Studies and a double minor in Hebrew and Jewish Studies. During her time at UNC, Ariel founded Sigma Rho Lambda, Carolina's first Jewish sorority. Ariel is the USY and Kadima advisor for Beth Meyer in Raleigh and has taught at the Lerner School and staffed the JCC Camp.

David is in his second year at UNC law school, having graduated with a BA in Religious Studies and Music. Before entering law school he worked for the American/Israel Cooperative Enterprise in Washington DC, and for our Jewish Federation. He is also the drummer for the Chapel Hill band, The Tell.

Perri Liberty is a native Israeli. She studied education at the Netanya College. She has worked for the JCC in San Diego and taught private Hebrew lessons both in San Diego and in North Carolina. She has taught Hebrew as a substitute teacher at the Lerner School. Perri is also a member of the Programming Committee for our new JCC Israel Center.

Judith Roth has been teaching at Midrasha for several years now. Judith has an MS in Library Science, an MSW, and is working towards a Masters in Judaic Studies from the Siegel College of Jewish Studies. She currently teaches at the Lerner School and she taught high schoolers for over 8 years at several Reform synagogues outside Cleveland and in Reston, VA. She is married with a 21-year old daughter. She has two dogs, a golden retriever and a scrappy chihuahua. She is enjoying teaching at Midrasha and making new friends!

Dr. Margarita Suarez is Assistant Professor in the Department of Religion and Philosophy at Meredith College in Raleigh. Her area of concentration is Theology and Culture, specializing in Global Liberation Theologies. The Rev. Dr. Suarez teaches courses in global liberation theologies, women in Christianity, and courses in religion and culture. This is her fifth year working on the course for the 10th grade students at Midrasha.

Dr. Jonathan Weiler is a professor of International Studies at UNC. He is the author of two books - [Human Rights in Russia](#), and [Authoritarianism and Polarization in American Politics](#), just released by Cambridge University Press. Jonathan also offers lectures on a variety of Jewish and Israel related topics as part of the Speakers Bureau of the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies.



8th/9th Grade Fall 2009

8th and 9th graders can take the following classes:

Sunday 5:00-5:30pm - Dinner for All Grades

Sunday 5:30-6:30pm

- MaNishtana to Mattisyahu: The Journey of Jewish Music - David Bernay (8th/9th)
- What IS Jewish Theology- Judith Roth (8th/9th)
- Is my life your business?- R.Zalman Bluming (8th/9th)
- Spritual Storytelling - Rachel Galper (8th/9th)
- J-teens—David and Ariel Krusch (8th/9th)
- Taste of Hebrew—Perri Liberty (8th/9th)

Sunday 6:30-7:30pm

- Kabbalah for the Teenage Soul - R. Zalman Bluming (8th/9th)
- Jewish Stories of “Home” and “Exile” - David Bernay (8th/9th)
- In the Image of God—Rachel Galper (8th/9th)
- Reading Ruth—Judith Roth (8th/9th grade)
- Jewish Wisdom for Teens- Yehudis Bluming (8th/9th)
- Introduction to the Babylonian Talmud—Rabbi Steve Kirschner
- Taste of Hebrew—Perri Liberty (8th/9th)

Schedule of Sessions—Fall Semester

Fall 2009 Classes will meet

September 13

October 11, 18, 25

November 1, 8, 15, 22

December 7, 14 (End of Semester Program)

There is no MidrasHa on November 29



Course Descriptions - Fall 2009—8th/9th Grade

8th/9th Grade Courses —Hour 1 (5:30-6:30)

Ma Nishtana to Matisyahu: The Journey of Jewish Music—David Bernay

Music is an integral part of Jewish life and history. As music triggers a spiritual and emotional response in the listener as well as the performer, it is no surprise that Jews have integrated music in prayer and in celebration, in sadness and in hope throughout their history.

Both religious and secular, musical performance is also a method of self-expression and self-identity. Through interactive lessons and group performances, this class will explore what makes music “Jewish.” Styles from classical liturgy, Jewish folk, Mizrahi and Middle Eastern, to modern rap, hip-hop and reggae will be sampled in hopes of broadening our understanding of Jewish music, its function in history and today.

What IS Jewish Theology? Can There be Such a Thing? - Judith Roth

This year-long class explores “Jewish Theology” focusing on God, creation, revelation, redemption, covenant/chosenness, and Halacha, Jewish law. Students will learn about the basic ideas of major Jewish philosophers and theologians in these areas: Maimonides, Spinoza, Luria, Buber, Soloveitchik, Rosenzweig, Kaplan, Heschel including several feminist thinkers, Rachel Adler and Judith Plaskow. We will discuss death, living with anxiety in modern life, what is knowing and not-knowing, finding meaning and purpose in our lives. We will include the impact of two critical experiences in the 20th century: the Shoah and the establishment of the State of Israel. This class is intended to provide students an opportunity to begin a life-long dialogue with themselves about what they mean when they talk about God, Judaism, and their identity as Jews.

Is my life any of your business? - R. Zalman Bluming

We'll spend an incredible semester exploring real-life issues that will test your courage and challenge your instincts. Discover what 3,000 years of tradition has to say about issues like drugs, smoking, suicide, extreme sports, self defense and rescuing strangers.

Spiritual Storytelling - Rachel Galper

Have you ever felt, or wish you could feel, real excitement when you read or hear a Jewish story or excerpt of Torah? Do you have trouble figuring out how holy texts could possibly apply in your life? Well, then this class is for you!

Together we will learn the art of public speaking from the heart by reviving and sharing holy stories and creating and delivering d'var Torahs from the weekly parshiot. Our focus will be on building "ruach" (spirit) in our ourselves and our audiences by transmitting the heart of our stories and d'vars using voice, gesture, movement, understanding and passion.

We will read and retell classic Chassidic stories, tales of Holy Women, Jewish Myths and Mystical tales, folktales, and stories from Torah. We will also study the weekly parshot and learn how to craft a d'var by identifying and developing a particular theme. When you finish this course, you will never look at the "same old story" quite the same way again.

J-teens: Social Connections in a Jewish Context - Ariel and David Krusch

Originally based on the book “J-girls Guide”, we have adapted this class to be co-ed. We will focus this semester on different kinds of social connections in a Jewish context. Some of our discussion topics include forgiveness; friendship; peer pressure; honoring parents; community involvement; and being Jewish in American society.

Taste of Hebrew—Perri Liberty

This class will focus primarily on developing skills in spoken modern Hebrew. No previous knowledge of Hebrew is required.



8th/9th Grade Courses Hour 2 (6:30-7:30)

Jewish Stories of Exile and Home - David Bernay

Stories are a core component of Jewish cultural history. In this class, we will discover how stories function as Jewish experiences, transmit Jewish values and reflect the diversity of Jewish history, specifically as it relates to the concepts of *“Exile”* and *“Home”*. We will read different types of stories or plays each week in order to deepen our understanding of *“Exile”* and *“Home”* in Jewish civilization.

Kabbalah and the Teenage Soul - R. Zalman Bluming

We will interactively study exciting Kabbalistic themes and some of the most mystical and intriguing parts of Jewish life. We'll apply these mystical teachings to our own lives. This Kabbalah class will leave you amazed, surprised and enriched in spirituality.

Jewish Wisdom for Teens -Yehudis Bluming

Traditional Judaism is full of wisdom that is relevant for living our lives today. We'll talk about things that are important to our lives, like romance and cliques, friendship and fame, rebellion and happiness—but we'll add the wisdom of traditional Judaism to the discussion.

Reading Ruth: The Essence of Judaism in a Few Short Pages - Judith Roth

The Story of Ruth has been described as illustrating the essence of Judaism, the touchstone of Jewish spiritual practice and its role in community. Love, romance, and hope, extreme loss, pain and despair, women's roles and legal status, gender roles and sexuality, legal status, conversion to Judaism and intermarriage, personal identity, women's relationships, being the “other” in society, the limitations of loyalty, and family connections are among the many themes of the Story of Ruth. This semester we will read this short text and explore the many facets of this ancient story, considering how it relates to our modern lives.

In the Image of God—Rachel Galper

As Jews we learn that we are made in God's image but are forbidden to make graven images of God. So how do we express our experience of the Divine in visual form? How can art deepen our connection to Judaism and the God of our understanding? How have contemporary Jewish artists grappled with these issues?

In this course we will work with paint, collage, assemblage, mosaic, clay and charcoal to make two and three dimensional mixed media pieces around such topics as divine and human love, life and death, religious rituals and prayers, hebrew music and letters, home and exile. We will explore the attributes of God (Exodus 34:6-7) and the many names of God, and gather inspiration from the works of such Jewish artists as Chagall, Chicago, Nevelson, and Rothko as well as from our own spiritual and creative vision.

Introduction to the Talmud—Rabbi Steve Kirschner

The Talmud is one of the most important sources in the rich Jewish textual tradition, second perhaps only to the Bible itself, and arguably one of the greatest literary works in world history. Many Jews study the Talmud daily. A combination of legal, narrative and legendary material (Halakhah, Aggadah and Midrash), the Talmud is a huge (20 volumes in a standard set!) and complicated piece of work. Spanning 600 years, the Talmud weaves together material from the time when the Second Temple still stood through the time when the center of Jewish culture had shifted from Judea to Babylonia. It is written in two languages – Hebrew and Aramaic.

We will begin with a portion of text from the section of Talmud dealing with blessings (Berakhot) and look at some of the key ways a Talmudic discussion is constructed – key words, argumentative style, proof texts and so on. We will use the Artscroll Talmud, which is translated and contains a vowelized Hebrew text, so no one needs to worry that his or her Hebrew (and Aramaic) isn't good enough!



10th grade Fall 2009

Welcome to this year's 10th grade Midrasha class. We are planning a very exciting year of learning and celebration. As you may know, the year is divided into two parts: an exploration of other faiths in the fall, and further learning about Judaism in the spring.

We begin with an unforgettable first semester learning about Judaism by comparing our faith to that of others. Experiencing the rituals of Sikhism, Hinduism, Buddhism, various forms of Christianity, and Islam will give us new perspective on our own theology and practice. This means that we'll be traveling on most Sunday mornings to various religious institutions around

our community. We'll be relying on parents to share the transportation responsibilities and they are welcome to stay and attend the religious services with our class.

This spring, Rabbi Leah Berkowitz will be teaching a new Midrasha course, entitled "Tough Questions, Jewish Answers." Do I have to believe in God to be Jewish? Is there a difference between being a good Jew and a good person? Does God care whom I marry? After spending a semester learning about other faiths, now we'll take a semester to explore our own, by asking ourselves these questions and more. Feel free to contact Rabbi Berkowitz with questions in advance so we can work them into the syllabus. This class will be on Sunday evenings from 5:30-7:30pm @ Midrasha.

We are also planning a weekend - January 8-11, 2010 at the L'taken Social Justice Seminar of the Religious Action Center in Washington in the spring. You'll hear more about that in the weeks to come.

Introduction to Plurality and Diversity within the Community at Large
Facilitated by Dr. Margarita Suárez
Car Pool Coordinator: Ms. Leslie Kreizman

August 30, 2009 - December 13, 2009

SOME TRIPS ARE NOT CONFIRMED a final schedule will be given out at orientation.

Drop off and Pick up students for field trips at the Judea Reform Education Building.

1. Aug. 30

Midrasha Initial Gathering / Orientation (11:00- 12:30)

This session is for parents and students. At this meeting, the curriculum will be discussed and coordinate

transportation coordinated for the field trips. Additionally, Judea Reform parents and students should

remain following this session to discuss Kabbalat Torah, formerly called Confirmation.

2. Sept. 13

VISIT 1 First Pentecostal Church (Svc. 10:50 - 12:45)

Meet at at 10am. We will discuss the nature of Pentecostalism before we leave for the church at 10:25am. The church is located at 2008 Carver St. in Durham.

Pentecostalism is a very conservative denomination. Be prepared to hear from the far right wing of Christianity. Students should be back to Judea by 2pm.

3. Sept. 20 Rosh Hashana (2nd day) – (no class) –

MINORASIA

4. Sept. 27 VISIT 2 Fisher Memorial United Holy Church (Svc. 11 - 12:45)
Meet at 10:30am to drive to 420 Piedmont Ave. in Durham. This is an African-American Church, small but very important in the religious life of the Durham Community. The church is led by Bishop Elroy Lewis and is affiliated with the United Holiness denomination. Students should be back to Judea by 1:15pm
5. Oct. 4 Sukkot (2nd day) – (no class) –
6. Oct. 11 Simchat Torah – no class
7. Oct. 18 VISIT 3 St. Barbara's Greek Orthodox Church (Svc. 10:15 - 11:30)
Meet at 9:45. We will attend services with St. Barbara's Greek Orthodox congregation at their temporary home on 1113 W. Main Street in Durham. "Orthodox" means "true belief" from the Greek words "orthē" and "doxa." Their worship is quite formal with much singing. Their "Divine Liturgy" is entirely in Greek. This church is part of the Eastern Orthodox Church which includes other national churches such as the Bulgarian and Russian Orthodox. Students should be back at Judea by 12:30pm.
8. Oct. 25 Conversation class 1 - 11:15am – 12:30pm
"How Christians Use Scriptures"
Meet inside the Judea Reform Education Bldg for a discussion of how Christianity understands the Hebrew Bible as a rich source for the proof of the validity of the New Testament. What are the important passages cited by Christian proselytizers as proof for the validity of the messiahship of Jesus and the authority of the New Testament? How should we answer those who want to convert us to Christianity?
9. Nov. 1 VISIT 4 First Presbyterian (Svc. 11 - 12)
Meet at 10:30am to drive to First Presbyterian Church, 305 E. Main St. In Durham. We will attend their services and then have lunch with some First Presbyterian youth and their ministers following worship. Students should be back to Judea Reform by 2pm.
10. Nov. 8 VISIT 5 Sikh Gurdwara (11:30 - 12:30 intro session; 12:30-1:35 worship; 1:35-2:15 lunch)
Meet at 10:45am to travel to the Gurdwara located at 3214 Banner in Durham (not far from Durham Regional Hospital). This session will include a session of introduction to Sikhism, attendance at part of their service, and the "lungr" or communal meal. (Great veggie Indian food!) Back at Judea by 2:45pm.
Or
Sri Venkateswara Temple (Intro session 10:30-11:15; Svc. 11:30 – 12:30)
Meet at 9:30am to travel to the temple located at 121 Balaji Place (Use 121 Baliji Place in GPS & Mapquest) (9421 Chapel Hill Road) Cary. Students should be back by 1:15pm.
11. Nov. 15 VISIT 7 Sikh Gurdwara or Sri Venkateswara Temple
12. Nov. 22 Conversation class 2, 11:15am – 1pm – "Judaism and Christianity: The Growth of Early Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism in the 1st Century" How did Judaism and Christianity become 2 separate faiths? What is the origin of Christian belief and why is the history of our relationship so painful? Why do Christians proselytize?
13. Nov. 29 Thanksgiving – no class
14. Dec. 6 VISIT 8 Buddha's Light International Society (Svc. 10-11:30)
Meet at Judea's Education Building at 9:00am to drive to the International Buddhist Progress Society in Cary. We will experience a Buddhist worship experience in Chinese and will meet with the Venerable Chueh Chuan afterwards to answer our questions. Students should be back to the Judea Reform Education Bldg by 12:30pm
- 15 Dec. 13 Final Potluck Dinner / conversation class 3 6-8pm
"Religious Differences in Your Life"
This special concluding program will begin at 6:15 with a pot luck dinner program for parents and students at the Judea Reform Education Bldg. We will have a discussion of universalism and particularism and their contrasting influence. When is it best to emphasize our universal similarity to all human beings? When should we focus on being Jews, set apart from the rest of the world? How do these factors play a role in our life choices such as college, marriage, child rearing, career choices, and spiritual quest? Wrap up and evaluation. We should be done by 8:30pm.



11th/12th Grades - Fall 2009

Fall 2009 - "TalkSpace Israel"

We would like to invite all 11th and 12th graders to participate in a year-long Midrasha seminar **"TalkSpace Israel" led by Rabbi Michael Goldman and Dr. Jonathan Weiler.** Please find registration forms attached.

Rabbi Goldman is the Rabbi of Duke Hillel and a long-time Midrasha teacher. Dr. Weiler is a professor of International Studies at UNC. Together they will facilitate a "no-agenda" seminar that will help participants deepen their knowledge of Israeli politics, culture, history and religion, and articulate their relationship with Israel, no matter where they stand on any of the issues.

The seminar will also include guest speakers, films and two trip opportunities – the L'taken Social Justice Seminar in Washington DC and end-of-year trip to New York City. Seminar participants with regular attendance will receive trip subsidies.

The class sessions will regularly meet Sunday evenings at Midrasha in the Judea Reform Education Building from 5:30-7:30pm. Dinner is also available at 5pm. Our first session will be on September 13 with sessions on:

October 11, 18, 25

November 1, 8, 15, 22

December 6, 13 (End of Semester Program)

January 10, 17, 24, 31

February 7, 14, 21, 28

March 7, 14, 21, 28

April 11, 18, 25

May 2, 9 (Graduation and End of Year Program)