

# PARIDES PROJECT

*one Thousand  
Homes of Dialogue*

## The **Manual**



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## Entering Pardes

**B**EFORE ABRAHAM BEGAN HIS ICONOCLASTIC MISSION OF teaching the world about G-d, he paid a visit to a well-known spiritual figure of the time, Malkitzedek King of Jerusalem. He came to seek council from the man of G=d as to how he should carry out his mission. What should the program consist of? How do we market G-d to the masses? We know very little about the discussions that took place at that meeting. The Torah does tell us the menu. Malkitzedek brought out some bread and some wine.

**B**read and wine have opposite characteristics. Bread is wonderful when it is hot out of the oven, fresh and new. Wine improves with age. The older it is the better it tastes. When teaching the world about G-d, said Malkitzedek, remember the secret of bread and wine. People are thirsty for new ideas, innovative, fresh thoughts applicable to the times we live in. Give them bread, today's bread. But never forget about the old wine. The soul is forever searching for that vintage, carefully aged teaching. The teachings that were heard by their fathers before them. Give them bread but give them wine.

**W**e at the Orthodox Union struggle with the balance of old and new. By definition we are here to strengthen a tradition which is over 3000 years old. Our mandate, however, is to present to the American Jewish community the program of the future and to remain on the cutting edge of Jewish education.

With the Orthodox Union's new Pardes Project, we have struck the balance.

## What is Pardes?

Simply defined, Pardes is a national adult education project, sponsored by the Orthodox Union, that offers a spiritual fitness program to help communities regenerate and reinforce enduring enthusiasm for their Judaism. Informal home-based discussion groups will meet initially once every four weeks to discuss the Torah's view on topical issues and issues such as effective parenting, successful marriages, character development, and business ethics using widely acclaimed material produced by the national Pardes team.

## Why Pardes?

Pardes is the bridge between Torah and life. In the words of the sainted Chofetz Chaim "many people go through the Torah, but find me a man that the Torah has gone through him." We feel that a life of Torah should necessarily lead to harmonious family structures, impeccable business integrity, and profound goodness of character. It's all there in the Torah but sometimes it has to be emphasized and discussed. Oftentimes, even those who study Torah regularly fail to connect their Torah learning to the vicissitudes of everyday life. This is the purpose of the Pardes project.

## Why not a shiur or a book?

Pardes works on a different educational principle. WE ARE NOT DISSEMINATING INFORMATION, PER SE, NOR ARE WE TRYING TO GET THE PARTICIPANT TO ACCEPT A PARTICULAR POINT OF VIEW. It is our conviction that the ultimate mitzvah of Torah study is for the individual to make his or her particular contribution in Torah and to reach their *individual potential*. The ultimate in spirituality is when the Torah shines through the prism of the individual and projects a new light. Pardes is designed to help you make your contribution.

## Is Pardes meant to replace my regular course of learning?

Absolutely not. We will only feel that we have accomplished our goal if your commitment to further learning increases. Pardes is designed to work side by side *and complement* whatever shiurim and chavrusot you may have. It affords the participant the opportunity to discuss Torah matters that one does not usually come across in the normal course of study.

## Whose participation are we aiming for?

We believe that Pardes is for anyone who wants to grow in their Jewishness. It is quite amazing how vast the appeal and acceptance of Pardes has been. The subject matter, the unusual nature of the material and, of course, the aspect of discussion make the information new and refreshing to almost anyone *even if they have had no previous experience in organized adult Torah education*. On the one hand, all the material is written in a self teaching style so anyone with a desire to learn can gain from the program. No previous Jewish education is necessary. Those, however, with the benefit of a strong Jewish background will enjoy the material on their level, as we have included all the original text and they will be sure to add their own dimension to the topic. We thought that the program would be a natural for university students, hence, we have formed successful Pardes groups on campuses around the country. We already believe that the Pardes project would be a very appropriate addition to senior citizen programming and will soon be making that connection. The Union has been asked to translate the material into Russian, Spanish, and French and we have had numerous requests from South Africa and Australia to supply them with the program. FROM BEGINNER TO TORAH SCHOLAR, PARDES IS FOR YOU.

## Who creates the Pardes material?

The Pardes idea and material comes from our Jewish Education team headed by Rabbi Yaacov Haber. In 1995, the Orthodox Union started its Department of Jewish Education. The mandate of this new department is to fill the educational needs of our adult constituents. We understand well that the future of Judaism is dependent on Jewish education and that the greatest service that we can perform for our synagogues is to offer them effective and innovative Torah education programs. To this end, we asked Rabbi Yaacov Haber to join our organization. Rabbi Haber, an internationally acclaimed teacher and lecturer, studied with the renowned Rav Chaim Pinchus Scheinberg and in the famed Brisk Yeshiva of Jerusalem as well as in the acclaimed Machon LeHora'ah of Jerusalem under the leadership of Harav Yaacov Hillel. After completing his ordination in Jerusalem, Rabbi Haber became a rabbi in Buffalo where he and his wife turned the city around. Rabbi Haber's community of over one hundred Ba'alei Teshuva became a model for synagogues and outreach centers across the country. He then moved with his family to Melbourne, Australia where in a short time created an adult education program that attracted over 1000 people a week. He combines his years of study with his experience in the Rabbinate and the Kiruv world in the Department of Jewish Education at the OU. In his words: "It all comes together in Pardes."

## Who can lead a Pardes group?

Anyone who can lead a discussion can lead a Pardes group! The nature of the material is user friendly and non-intimidating. We suggest that an individual or a couple invite ten of their friends to their home once a month for an hour. The leader need not be the host, many groups rotate discussion leaders and many discussion leaders rotate homes. Pardes is flexible because there are as many types of Jews as there are Jewish people. Pardes offers a unique opportunity for the rabbi, as he can rotate to different discussion groups in his community, offering insight and Torah and becoming involved in the congregation's conversation. He may also call together all groups after their discussion and sum up or place the subject matter into a halachic perspective. This is, of course, a wonderful opportunity for the members of a congregation to seek out the rabbi's views and comments that are otherwise not discussed.

## Who's doing Pardes now?

We currently have over 800 active Pardes groups in homes and college campuses across North America, Israel, England, Australia, and South Africa (approximately over 10,000 people).

## How much does it cost?

Pardes is an educational service of the Orthodox Union. **THERE IS NO CHARGE.** When you join you will receive our Pardes host and leader's guide in the mail. You will also receive monthly 10 booklets (more by special request), one for each person in your group.

## How to join?

Return the enclosed card or call 1-800-4CHAVER and speak to our Department of Jewish Education, or e-mail us at [pardes@ou.org](mailto:pardes@ou.org). You can also visit our web page at <http://www.ou.org/pardes.html>.



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## Instructions to Host

**T**HE PARDES PROJECT OF THE ORTHODOX Union is designed to become your forum; your opportunity to gather with others in informal, regular sessions, and review important issues in light of our tradition.

Thank you for stepping forward to host this group. You are urged to invite ten friends and neighbors to your home or somewhere convenient for a lively session of dialogue and study. No elaborate preparation is necessary; this is not designed to be a catered event. We will provide you with all of the resource material you need. Just call and invite your friends.

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## Guidelines for the Moderator

- The intent of this forum, the Pardes Project, is to allow you to discover through discussion what our tradition teaches us on the topic under review.
- As the key to this discussion group is participation by each member, we urge you to join in the conversation. Your comments on the subject are important to the process, and by using the source material provided, you can focus your contribution to the dialogue to enlighten others and evaluate other points of view.
- The following format is suggested for moderating your Pardes session:
  - Read the “introduction” aloud.
  - Read aloud and discuss briefly the moral dilemma (the “How would you respond?” section).
  - Recite together the Tefillah (prayer) either in Hebrew or English, or both.
  - Each Torah source should be read aloud by one of the participants.

- Discuss each source with the group. Ask them, “now that you have read the source, what do you know now, that you didn’t know before?”
  - Once again discuss the moral dilemma in light of the Torah sources.
  - If the group becomes bogged down on a particular point, move on to the next point. If there is time at the end of the session, return to the point.
  - At the conclusion of the session, please explain to the group that their feedback is important to us.
  - Have each participant fill out the enclosed form and mail or fax it to us, attention: Department of Jewish Education.
- We encourage you to reconvene your group on a monthly basis. Schedule the next meeting today. The Pardes Project is an ongoing Adult Education project of the Orthodox Union’s Department of Jewish Education.
- Pardes educational kits will be sent to your home prior to each session.