

CJS NEWS

ANNUAL REVIEW 2020–2021

CENTER
for
JEWISH
STUDIES



Harvard University

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Maayan Zik, panelist, April 2021 "Black & Jewish: Activist Voices"

WHAT IS THE CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES?

The Center for Jewish Studies serves as an umbrella organization, encompassing and coordinating the many academic and extra-curricular programs in Jewish studies at Harvard University. Faculty, courses, and other academic programs at the University are located in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, the Harvard Divinity School, and the Harvard Law School. The Center supports student and faculty research, teaching, and visiting research scholars from around the world in Jewish studies.

We also sponsor and co-sponsor conferences, lectures and seminars, and work closely with departments across the Harvard campus as well as with the Mahindra Center for the Humanities, the Center for European Studies, the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research, and the Julis-Rabinowitz Program on Jewish and Israeli Law in Harvard Law School. The Judaica Division of Widener Library boasts one of the world's greatest library collections in the world. Taken together, Harvard offers students and scholars resources in Jewish studies virtually unparalleled anywhere in the world.



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David Stern

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PHOTOGRAPHY: By CJS staff and students,
also as submitted from featured individuals.
Photos of Solomon gate dedication by John
Deputy

ON THE COVER: Choral Synagogue,
Main Gate, St. Petersburg, Russia.
Photo by William Brumfield



DAVID STERN

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

As I write this letter, we are one week into the new fall semester. Harvard is back to “in-person” classes, albeit with everyone masked and strictly monitored with weekly COVID-19 testing. The Harvard libraries have re-opened, the Yard is filled with students bustling to and from classes, and while most public lectures and events remain online and on Zoom,

we’re all hoping cautiously for a return to normalcy. Spirits are high, and there is real excitement about seeing each other in person.

Last year was a challenge, but the Center operated remotely at full steam. We sponsored or co-sponsored more than 50 lectures and events, all on Zoom, and with international audiences that far exceeded in numbers anything we’ve sponsored in the past. With the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research, the Center launched a talk series entitled “Black and Jewish,” with two panels and a conversation. These events included artists, activists, and intellectuals who discussed their professional lives and personal experiences as Americans who are Black and Jewish. This groundbreaking series, which examines the challenges and prospects of Black diversity and Jewish diversity, drew record audiences. In January, the Center with the Julis-Rabinowitz Program on Jewish and Israeli Law at Harvard Law School, ran an international conference entitled “What is the Mishnah?” Originally planned to be held in person at Harvard, the conference was transitioned to an online format of seven panels stretched out over two weeks; each panel drew an audience of at least two hundred participants. Over the academic year, our graduate students continued to organize and run their two workshops on the Hebrew Bible and Jewish studies, with regular lectures in each, and our various lecture series in modern Jewish history and our joint lectures in medieval studies and Jewish studies and the history of the book also continued as usual. At the close of the academic year, **Sara Feldman**, Preceptor in Yiddish, organized a fascinating panel on Queer Yiddishkeit that, again, drew a large online audience from around the world.

Our Starr Seminars last spring were dedicated to the topic of “The Changing Contours of Jewish Thought” and were co-organized by **Professors Jay Harris, David Stern, and Elliot Wolfson**. Unhappily, our Starr and Stroock Fellows—from across America and Israel—were unable to geographically be in Cambridge and the Starr Seminars were held online, but remained intellectually invigorating for all. This coming year, the Starr Fellowships are dedicated to recent post-doctoral scholars (who have completed their degrees in the last three years) working in some area of Jewish studies in the medieval period. We decided to focus the fellowships on this group of scholars specifically because of the dire job market in the wake of the pandemic; this was the least we could do as a service to the profession. Some Starr Fellows have already arrived in Cambridge and we’re praying that the Starr Seminars will be held in person in the spring.

All the while, our courses—on Zoom last year, in-person this semester—have continued apace and Jewish studies programming at Harvard continues to grow. This semester we welcome a new faculty member, **Dr. Julia Rhyder**, as Assistant Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations in Biblical studies. Several searches for other positions in Jewish studies are in process.

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We are also very happy to announce the establishment of two new funds. The first of these is the **Nathan Snyder A.B. '56 and Geraldine Snyder Fund** which will support student research and travel and language instruction in Jewish languages. The second is a new lecture fund established by the **Charles H. Revson Foundation in honor of Stacy Dick**, a long-time supporter of the Center and a member of the Charles H. Revson Foundation Board. The first Stacy Dick Lecture was delivered by **Jerome Groopman, MD** of Harvard Medical School on October 5. Please follow the link to access a full recording of this event: <https://vimeo.com/632987251/0b604e8442>.

All this would not be possible without the extraordinary generosity of our Friends, supporters, and donors. This is always the case, but it's especially true during this difficult period. On behalf of my faculty colleagues and the students associated with the Center, we express our warmest thanks and appreciation for all your encouragement and devotion.

Warmly,



David Stern

Director of the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University
Harry Starr Professor of Classical and Modern Jewish and
Hebrew Literature and Professor of Comparative Literature



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If you use Facebook, please "like" the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University. You will hear about events, programs, application deadlines and other important information.

You can find our Facebook page at facebook.com/CenterForJewishStudies

Follow us on Twitter!

If you use Twitter, you can find us at @HarvardCJS



WELCOME, OSNAT AHARONI!

We are pleased to welcome **Osnat Aharoni** to the CJS administrative team! She joins us part-time, currently as a staff member, focusing on events and communications at the Center, while she continues her work as a Teaching Assistant. Osnat has been teaching modern Hebrew in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations with Dr. Irit Aharony (no relation) for nearly 12 years, and has received the Harvard University Certificate of Distinction in Teaching for 19 semesters. Together, they have built a remarkable and vibrant language program, held out as an example to others at Harvard and much beloved by students. Osnat played a central role in moving much of the curricular content online and in maintaining their course websites—proving particularly helpful during pandemic protocols.

Starting at the beginning of summer, Osnat has already helped the Center in many significant ways. In particular, she has given us some fabulous ideas for revamping our website and has actively helped to organize and spearhead this effort. We look forward to sharing a more user-friendly site by the end of the fall semester! Osnat's knowledge and editing skills have already helped to improve this issue of CJS News and we appreciate her warmth, collegiality, humor, and professionalism. Osnat holds M.S. and B.S. degrees in Chemistry and is experienced in teaching, curriculum development, and editing.

FACULTY NEWS



FROM THE DESK OF JON D. LEVENSON

*Albert A. List Professor of Jewish Studies,
Harvard Divinity School*

Professor Levenson's activities over the past year included:

■ Articles & Publications:

"Historical-Critical Scholarship Alone Does Not Constitute 'Torah,'" in the series "Journeys: On Becoming a Jewish Biblical Scholar," *TheTorah.com*, May 6, 2021, at <https://www.thetorah.com/article/historical-critical-scholarship-alone-does-not-constitute-torah>

"Did Jews Really Believe There Were Two Gods in Heaven?" *Mosaic*, August 4, 2020, at <https://mosaicmagazine.com/observation/religion-holidays/2020/08/did-jews-really-believe-there-were-two-gods-in-heaven/>

"Does the New Testament Support Christian Zionism?" *Mosaic*, July 20, 2020, at <https://mosaicmagazine.com/response/history-ideas/2020/07/does-the-new-testament-support-christian-zionism/>

■ Presentations:

September 7, 2020

The *Aqedah* Project: <https://vimeo.com/453481826>

October 14, 2020

"An Introduction to Midrash: Why Did God Test Abraham?" lecture for the Yongsan International School of Seoul, South Korea (video-conference)

December 14, 2020

"Author Discussion with Francis X. Clooney, S.J., *Reading the Hindu and Christian Classics: Why and How Deep Learning Still Matters*": <https://cswr.hds.harvard.edu/news/2021/1/12/>

video-reading-hindu-and-christian-classics-why-and-how-deep-learning-still-matters

January 29, 2021

The Imagers Podcast, "The Love of God": <https://podcasts.google.com/feed/aHR0cHM6Ly90aGVpbWFnZXJzLm9yZ-y90aGUtaW1hZ2Vycyz9mb3JtYXQ9cnNz/episode/>

February 15, 2021

The Megillah Project: <https://vimeo.com/510867689>

February 21, 2021

"Is G-d Mentioned in the Megillah?" Yom Limmud Seminar in Jewish Studies: The Book of Esther and Purim, sponsored by Oxford University Chabad, Oxford, England, UK (video-conference)

March 21, 2021

"Did the Israelites Deserve to Be Taken out of Egypt? An Ancient Theological Debate in Midrashic Form," a lecture at Temple Reyim, Newton, MA (video-conference)



FROM THE DESK OF DEREK PENSLAR

*William Lee Frost Professor of Jewish History,
Department of History*

Professor Penslar's activities over the past year included:

■ Articles & Publications:

"Theodor Herzl, Race, and Empire," in *Making History Jewish: The Dialectics of Jewish History in Eastern Europe and the Middle East*, eds. Pawel Maciejko and Scott Ury (Brill)

“Towards a Field of Israel/Palestine Studies,” in *Between the “Jewish Question” and the “Arab Question:” Contemporary Entanglements and Juxtapositions*, eds. Bashir Bashir and Leila Farsekh (Columbia University Press).

■ Academic Presentations and Participations:

Professor Penslar gave remote talks for American University, Birkbeck College, London, the Center for Jewish History, Columbia University, Dalhousie University, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, New York University, and UCLA.

■ Other:

Professor Penslar’s biography, *Theodor Herzl: The Charismatic Leader*, won the 2020 Canadian Jewish Literary Award in the History category.

Derek Penslar is completing a book manuscript titled *Zionism: An Emotional State*.



FROM THE DESK OF DAVID STERN

*Harry Starr Professor of Classical and Modern Jewish and Hebrew Literature and Professor of Comparative Literature
Director, Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University*

David Stern spent the 2020–2021 academic year in his “COVID-vacation” home in Philadelphia (with his wife, Kathryn Hellerstein, a Professor of Yiddish at the University of Pennsylvania and who directs the Jewish Studies Program there). Even so, he never felt too far away from Cambridge. He taught his four courses remotely and directed the Center for Jewish Studies by Zoom and telephone. From his third-floor home office, he lectured across America and internationally: at Nanjing University in China and Bern University in Switzerland, at the University of Washington in Seattle, the Free Library in Philadelphia, the Museum of the Bible in Washington DC, and at the Medieval Studies Seminar at the Mahindra Humanities Center at Harvard. His lecture in Nanjing was translated into Chinese and published in the prestigious literary journal *Wen Hui Bao*. He also was one

of the co-organizers of the international conference, “What is Mishnah?” held at Harvard in January, and delivered a major paper on the early transmission and publication of the Mishnah.

■ Articles & Publications:

Professor Stern co-edited a volume of essays by Alan Mintz (a colleague who died tragically several years ago) on modern Hebrew literature, entitled *American Hebraist*, to be published in the coming year. He published several articles, including “Scrolling Through the Haftarah,” in *Windows on Jewish Worlds: Essays in Honor of William Gross, Collector of Judaica*; “The Topography of the Talmudic Page” in *The Visualization of Knowledge in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period*; and review essays in *The Jewish Review of Books* and *Mosaic*.

FROM THE DESK OF SAUL ZARITT

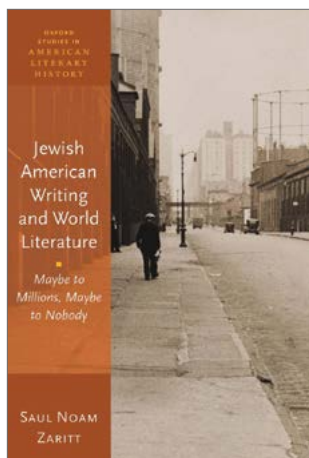
Associate Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and Comparative Literature

■ Articles & Publications:

Professor Zaritt recently published a volume, *Jewish American Writing and World Literature*. <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/jewish-american-writing-and-world-literature-9780198863717?cc=us&lang=en&#>.

■ Academic Presentations and Participations:

Prof. Zaritt spoke at a symposium on October 15, 2020, “Jewish American Writing and World Literature: A Symposium,” together with **Sunny Yudkoff**, Assistant Professor, Department of German, Nordic and Slavic, University of Wisconsin, Madison and **Adriana X. Jacobs**, Associate Professor and Cowley Lecturer in Modern Hebrew Literature, University of Oxford.



Zaritt’s *Jewish American Writing and World Literature* was published in December, 2020.



WELCOME, PROFESSOR JULIA RHYDER

—by Andrew Teeter, Professor of Hebrew Bible, Harvard Divinity School

We are delighted to welcome **Julia Rhyder** as Assistant Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and to the Executive Committee of the Center for Jewish Studies. Dr. Rhyder is a specialist in the interdisciplinary study of the Hebrew Bible, combining deep philological and historical-critical expertise with training in anthropology and social theory. She comes to Harvard most recently from the University of Basel, where she was lecturer and

Swiss National Science Foundation Senior Researcher. Her celebrated and prize-winning 2018 dissertation at the University of Lausanne was published in 2019 as *Centralizing the Cult: The Holiness Legislation in Leviticus 17–26* (Mohr Siebeck), for which she was additionally awarded the 2021 Manfred Lautenschlaeger Award for Theological Promise.

Her current research projects include a monograph on festivals commemorating warfare within the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Jewish literature, as well as a commentary on Amos. An Australian who has worked and taught for the past eight years in French- and German-speaking Swiss academic contexts, Julia Rhyder is a remarkably adaptable and well-networked scholar, who brings immense energy and intellectual intensity both to her research and to the classroom. This fall, she will be teaching “Bible and Empire,” an introductory-level course with no prerequisites, and “Sacred Space and Sacred Time in Ancient Israel,” for which a year of Biblical Hebrew is required. In the spring, she will teach “Ancient Diets: Food and Identity in Ancient Israel,” as well as “The History of God: Evidence from the Psalms.”

We are thrilled that Julia Rhyder is joining us, filling major gaps in our curriculum, and we look forward to the essential role she will play in the study of the Hebrew Bible, ancient Judaism, the broader ancient Near East, and many related fields and programs at Harvard in the years to come.



Detail from Choral Synagogue, St. Petersburg, Russia. Photo by William Brumfield

VISITORS TO CJS

2020–2021 WHO'S WHO OF VISITORS

Gerard Weinstock Visiting Professor

Marion Aptroot, Heinrich Heine University
Düsseldorf (spring)

Daniel Jeremy Silver Fellow

Rabbi Shmuel Hain, Young Israel Ohab Zedek of
North Riverdale/Yonkers (spring)

Alan M. Stroock Fellow

Gilah Kletenik, New York University (academic year)

Harry Starr Fellows in Judaica

Theme: "The Changing Contours of Jewish Thought"

Jonatan Benarroch, The Hebrew University of
Jerusalem (academic year)

Marc Herman, Rutgers University (spring)

Lynn Kaye, Brandeis University (academic year)

Ehud Krinis, Ben-Gurion University (academic year)

Michal Ohana, Bar-Ilan University (academic year)

Yosi Yisraeli, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
(academic year)

Michael Zank, Boston University (Honorary Starr
Fellow, academic year)

Visiting Scholars, Fellows and Post-Doctoral Fellows

Francesca Bregoli, Queens College and The
Graduate Center, CUNY (fall)

Hadar Feldman Samet, The Hebrew University of
Jerusalem (fall)

Susanne Klingenstein, Brandeis University
(academic year)

Geoffrey Levin, Emory University (fall)

Joshua Meyers, Fusion Academy and Queens
College, CUNY (fall)

Paul Nahme, Brown University (fall)

Orit Rozin, Tel Aviv University (fall)

David Sclar, Independent scholar (academic year)

Joshua Teplitsky, Stony Brook University (fall)

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem Exchange Student

Itai Kagan (see page 38)

The Center for Jewish Studies is pleased to support scholars, fellows, and exchange students, as well as Visiting Professors and Visiting Lecturers in Jewish studies. Due to pandemic-related travel restrictions, however, 2020–2021 visitors were unable to attend in person.

CJS extends its special thanks to all those visitors whose virtual presence created a vibrant online interchange of ideas throughout the year.

VISITING PROFESSOR



MARION APTROOT

**GERARD WEINSTOCK VISITING PROFESSOR IN
JEWISH STUDIES, DEPARTMENT OF NEAR EAST-
ERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS (SPRING)**

*Professor of Yiddish Culture, Language and Literature
Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf*

We were thrilled to welcome Professor Marion Aptroot of Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf back to Harvard as a Visiting Professor for the spring of 2021. She attracted an enthusiastic group of students for her course on Old Yiddish, the first offered through the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. This class examined medieval and early modern Yiddish literature and its context within broader European and Jewish cultures.

The Gerard Weinstock Visiting Professorship in Jewish Studies was established with a generous gift from Gerard Weinstock to enable us to bring faculty members from other universities to supplement our regular course offerings. We are extremely grateful to the Weinstock family for their generosity which made this fund possible. Professor Aptroot's Old Yiddish class is a perfect example of one such course, which was also a response to student demand.

Marion Aptroot's return to teach at Harvard was particularly poignant, as she served as our Preceptor in Yiddish from 1993–1996. It is wonderful to see how her career has blossomed since that time. Her work focuses on older Yiddish literature and the history of the Yiddish language in their broader contexts. She has written, co-edited or co-authored several books, including: *Araynfir in der yidisher shprakh un kultur* (2002); *Storm in the Community: Yiddish Polemical Pamphlets of Amsterdam Jewry, 1797–1798* (2002); *Isaak Euchel, Reb Henoch, oder: woß tut me damit? Eine jüdische Komödie der Aufklärungszeit* (2004); *Jiddisch: Geschichte und Kultur einer Weltsprache* (2010); *Leket: Yiddish Studies Today* (2012); *Yiddish Language Structures* (2014); and *Yiddish Knights* (2020).

For more information, please see <https://ingeveb.org/people/marion-aptroot>. ■

DANIEL JEREMY SILVER FELLOW

IT WAS A PLEASURE TO HOST SAMUEL "SHMUEL" HAIN as our 27th Daniel Jeremy Silver Fellow. Rabbi Hain is a pulpit rabbi and educator who since 2006 has led his congregation as it developed into a vibrant community synagogue. He also serves as *Rosh Beit Midrash* at SAR High School. He holds several leadership and teaching roles there and has served similarly at other Jewish educational institutions in the New York area. He has also co-authored and edited several volumes. This fellowship was established in memory of Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver '48 to enable an "active congregational rabbi who has demonstrated exceptional intellectual and academic interest, originality and energy" to engage in full-time research at Harvard for a semester.

I remember the exact date I received the invitation from the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard to serve as the Daniel Jeremy Silver Fellow. It was March 3rd, 2020, the very same day our high school and synagogue in Riverdale were placed in quarantine by the New York State Department of Health, among the first institutions in the U.S. impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.



SHMUEL HAIN

Rabbi, Young Israel Ohab Zedek of North Riverdale/Yonkers, New York

As a congregational rabbi with a deep interest in academic scholarship, I was incredibly excited about the opportunity to spend a semester on sabbatical at Harvard. But the uncertainty of a global pandemic made it difficult to imagine; a remote fellowship was the last thing I had in mind when I had applied. This was supposed to be a sabbatical away from the day-to-day concerns of the rabbinate. In June 2020, when we finally reopened our synagogue, it was clear that there was no way I would leave my congregation during the pandemic. Moreover, Harvard soon announced that there would be no access to the campus for visiting researchers.

Nevertheless, the fellowship was a truly enriching experience. The remote aspect of the fellowship, while certainly not what I had envisioned, did facilitate additional possibilities. More than that, my research proposal—an interdisciplinary study of the Jewish laws of mourning—took on additional layers of valence amidst the death and devastation of the pandemic.

Thanks to the magic of Zoom and the administrative assistance of **Professor David Stern**, **Dr. Rachel Rockenmacher**, and **Sandy Cantave Vil**, I was able to participate in numerous online programs and seminars during both the fall and spring semesters. I presented two papers to the Starr Fellows, the first

'My research proposal—an interdisciplinary study of the Jewish laws of mourning—took on additional layers of valence amidst the death and devastation of the pandemic.'

—Rabbi Hain

an analysis of the principle that the law follows the lenient view in the realm of mourning, and the second an examination of the biblical sources for mourning in rabbinic literature.

The collegiality of the Starr Fellows and the faculty participants, **Professors Jay Harris, David Stern and Elliot Wolfson**, made these experiences extraordinarily helpful for expanding my research and enhancing my writing. Special thanks to Starr Fellow **Prof. Lynn Kaye** and Stroock Fellow **Dr. Gilah Kletenik**, who devoted personal time beyond the presentations to give me feedback and suggestions for further avenues of research.

There was a second highlight to this remote academic fellowship. I greatly enjoyed participating in two semesters of **Professor Noah Feldman's** extraordinary Jewish legal readings seminar at Harvard Law School. The first semester focused on pandemic in Jewish law, while the second focused on "Halakhah and the Soul."

While the year as a remote Silver Fellow was more impactful than I thought possible, I am especially thrilled that the Center has extended an invitation to continue my affiliation for the 2021–2022 academic year. I am so excited to build on the relationships I have already formed online with so many members of the Harvard community with an in-person semester-long sabbatical in spring 2022. I hope to use that time to further my research and eventually produce a volume integrating Halakhic, academic, and pastoral perspectives on *Hilkhoh Aveilut* (the Jewish laws of mourning). ■

ALAN M. STROOCK FELLOW

GILAH KLETENIK

New York University

It was a privilege to serve as Alan M. Stroock Fellow throughout the 2020–2021 academic year. During the fall semester, my work focused on preparing a proposal for my first book, *Sovereignty Disrupted: Spinoza on the Disparity of Reality* and on beginning the process of writing it. I continued to work on the manuscript throughout the spring semester, making considerable strides towards its completion. Over the course of the year, I also dedicated time to research and initial work on an article for a peer-reviewed journal focusing on Emmanuel Levinas's criticism of Spinoza's philosophy. Toward the conclusion of the spring semester, I co-authored and published two critical reflections on the field of Jewish studies.



"During the fall semester, my work focused on preparing a proposal for my first book, *Sovereignty Disrupted: Spinoza on the Disparity of Reality* and on beginning the process of writing it."

—Gilah Kletenik

These public interventions have already provoked much conversation within the field and beyond, which has led to the planning of future events and discussions to address the issues that we raised.

Despite the virtual nature of this year's fellowship, I benefited from connections with the Starr and Silver Fellows and with the faculty facilitators of the fellowship. The gatherings and conversations throughout the year, and the Starr Seminars during the spring, were valuable spaces for the spirited exchange of ideas. I look forward to continuing scholarly conversation and collaboration with members of this community in the future. ■

2020–21 HARRY STARR FELLOWS IN JUDAICA

THE HARRY STARR FELLOWSHIP IN JUDAICA supports a group of scholars from around the world to gather at Harvard to engage in full-time research in Jewish studies. This research fellowship was founded with a generous bequest from the estate of Harry Starr, class of 1921, former president of the Lucius Littauer Foundation.

The Starr Fellowship is open to scholars at different stages of their academic careers. From a record number of applicants, we selected seven Starr Fellows for 2020–21. Most years, we organize the fellowship around a designated subject area and work together with an academic department in that field. Last year, we invited a group of scholars early in their careers around the topic of “The Changing Contours of

Jewish Thought.” Starr Fellows presented their works in progress at the Starr Seminars, weekly remote meetings over Zoom during the spring semester. We were also able to invite some outside speakers to present to the group. These presentations often elicited lively discussions between the Starr Fellows, other visiting scholars, and faculty and students from Harvard and other area universities.

THE STARR SEMINARS 2021

The Changing Contours of Jewish Thought

Harvard Faculty Hosts: Jay Harris, David Stern; Guest Host: Elliot Wolfson

February 3

Elliot Wolfson, University of California, Santa Barbara

“Hypernomian Piety and the Mystical Rationale of the Commandments in Nathan of Gaza’s Sefer ha-Beri’ah” (Orientation meeting)

February 10

Michael Zank, Boston University

“Literary Aspects of Philosophical Writing: The Case of Maimonides’s Guide for the Perplexed”

February 17

Marc Herman, Rutgers University

“The Sacred Histories of al-Andalus: Rewriting the Oral Torah in (the terms of) the Islamic West”

February 24

Shmuel Hain, Young Israel Ohab Zedek of North Riverdale/Yonkers

“Anticipatory Avelut: A Case Study in Rabbinic Thanatology”

March 3

Jonatan Benarroch, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

“Builder and Destroyer: Kabbalistic Responses to Christian Exegesis on the Mystery of Benaiah, son of Jehoiada (2 Sam. 23:20-21; 1 Chr. 11:22-23)”

March 10

Yosi Yisraeli, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

“Historicizing Jewish ‘Dogma’: Rethinking Joseph Albo’s Book of Principles (c. 1420)”

March 17

Ehud Krinis, Ben-Gurion University

“Stranger in This World: Bahya ibn Paquda and the Turn Inward in Islamic and Judeo-Arabic Asceticism (Zuhd)”

April 7

Michal Ohana, Bar-Ilan University

“Jewish Thought in North Africa in the Generations following the Spanish Expulsion”

April 14

Gilah Kletenik, New York University

“To Infinity, Not Beyond: Spinoza’s Ontology of the Not-One”

April 21

Lynn Kaye, Brandeis University

“Wastes of Time: A Halakhic View Across History”

April 28

Elliot Wolfson, University of California, Santa Barbara

“Gnosis and the Covert Theology of Antitheology: Heidegger, Apocalypticism, and Gnosticism in Susan and Jacob Taubes”

May 5

Luis Girón-Negrón, Harvard University

“Arragel as Biblical Commentator: His Glosses on Genesis”

May 12

Yehudah Mirsky, Brandeis University

“Personhood – Individual, National, Universal – in the Thought of Aharon David Gordon”

NOTES FROM THE 2020–21 STARR FELLOWS



JONATAN M. BENARROCH

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

I am grateful for the opportunity to join Harvard's Center for Jewish Studies as a Harry Starr Fellow. Although we were unable to be physically present in Cambridge, the warm welcoming of the Center's faculty and staff, and the weekly meetings and Seminars helped to create a "Harvard experience." The use of Harvard's libraries, especially the digital resources, was extremely helpful during last year's lockdowns.

Thanks to the Starr Fellowship, I was able to dedicate the year to research, and completed my monograph, tentatively entitled *Jesus and the 'Holy Mother' in the Zohar: Kabbalistic Responses to Christianity in Medieval Castile*. It breaks new ground by showing that kabbalistic homilies engage in a profound and complex dialogue with Christianity. It demonstrates how knowledge of medieval Christian treatises and commentaries written in Latin, such as patristic Christological exegesis and the *Glossa Ordinaria* (the medieval patristic biblical glosses), can transform our understanding of kabbalistic biblical exegesis.

Despite being somewhat covert, these polemics against Christianity are integral to medieval Castilian Kabbalah. In my work, I show how Castilian kabbalistic texts contain subversive reinterpretations of Christian theology, literature, and art, which are used to promote Judaism and critique various aspects of Christianity. This area of research is of great significance because it demonstrates how kabbalistic discourse negotiated the very real and pressing problems—theological, intellectual, and above all, theo-political—that Christianity posed for Judaism.

I am also pleased to share that I have recently been awarded the Marcel-Jacques Dubois prize for outstanding research projects in the fields of Christian thought in its multicultural affinities from the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute.

The most significant experience this year at Harvard was the intriguing and inspiring Starr Seminar meetings. Even though they were held remotely, they enabled deep and meaningful conversations. The feedback I received on my Starr Seminar presentation greatly enriched my research and broadened my perspectives on several aspects of this project. I especially want to express my gratitude to **Professors David Stern, Jay Harris, Elliot Wolfson, and Luis Girón Negrón** for their enriching and thoughtful comments. I also want to thank this year's Fellows for many friendly and stimulating encounters.

Finally, I would like to personally thank **Professor Stern** for all his kind support in offering helpful advice on both academic and career-related issues. I am also deeply grateful to **Rachel Rockenmacher, Sandy Cantave Vil, and Allison Andrews** for their kind assistance throughout the year. ■



Photo by Debbie Rybak

MARC HERMAN

Rutgers University

During my time as a Starr Fellow in the spring semester of 2021, I made significant progress on my monograph, *Imagining Revelation: Medieval Jewish Presentations of the Oral Torah in an Islamic Key*. *Imagining Revelation* will be the first systematic exploration of the Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic accounts of Talmudic tradition, composed between

"...I made significant progress on my monograph, *Imagining Revelation*, which explores Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic accounts of Talmudic tradition composed between the tenth and twelfth centuries."

—Marc Herman

the tenth and twelfth centuries, and will demonstrate that the sacred histories of leading Jewish jurists drew on contemporaneous Islamic legal writings in their efforts to legitimize late antique Rabbinic Judaism. In addition, I was able to submit the final draft of a co-edited volume, *Accounting for the Commandments in Medieval Judaism: Studies in Law, Philosophy, Pietism, and Kabbalah*, forthcoming later this year with Brill Press. ■



LYNN KAYE

Brandeis University

The 2020–2021 Harry Starr Fellowship at Harvard afforded me the time necessary to conduct in-depth research into Roman and other comparative contexts for early rabbinic literary representations of idling, as either praiseworthy or problematic, for different types of people in a variety of contexts. The research is part of my book project, *Wasting Time: Jewish Ideologies of Time and Pious Busyness*. The book describes, historically contextualizes, and critiques a prevalent but unexamined concern in late antique (c. 200–550 CE) through modern (18th–21st centuries CE) rabbinic thought, *bitul zeman*, wasting time. It traces the origins of this concept in rabbinic texts from Roman Palestine and Sasanian Mesopotamia, which did not conceive of time as a resource that could be “wasted,” to 21st-century Jewish legal and moralistic texts, which frame *bitul zeman* as a sin. The concept of time changed from pervasive, contextual, and mainly implicit to an identified, valuable resource in modern times. Moreover, while it is commonly held that *bitul zeman* is synonymous with *bitul Torah*, or failure to devote oneself to Torah study, my analysis shows a different conceptual trajectory.

Despite our fellowship being entirely virtual, during the pandemic the Harvard Jewish studies faculty, **Sandy Cantave Vil**, and **Rachel Rockenmacher** at the Center for Jewish Studies ensured a feeling of community among the Starr, Silver, and Stroock Fellows through online gatherings throughout the year. It was my pleasure to get to know the

other Fellows and the Harvard faculty and staff, and to be able to take advantage of the extensive virtual library resources. I was fortunate indeed, despite the limitations on in-person gathering, to be a part of this year’s fellowship and to have the opportunity to research, think and write with the support of the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard. ■

EHUD KRINIS

“...The first of two planned volumes will be dedicated to Bahya ibn Paquda’s work and its relation to the early Islamic ascetic tradition of the *zuhd*. I have devoted my time as a Starr Fellow at Harvard to working on this forthcoming volume.”

—Ehud Krinis

Ben-Gurion University

Though the COVID-19 pandemic prevented me from being physically present at Harvard during the academic year 2020–21, Zoom and other means of communication enabled me to maintain contact with the other Fellows and staff at the Center for Jewish Studies. I was grateful for the access provided to me as a Starr Fellow to utilize the splendid online resources available to Harvard’s students and scholars. I am grateful to the Center for extending our affiliations until the end of 2021. This extension will hopefully provide me with the opportunity to visit the University in person and spend some time on campus and in Cambridge.

In recent years, I devoted my research to highlighting the innovative dimensions in the thoughts presented in two Medieval Judeo-Arabic classics: Bahya ibn Paquda’s *Duties of the Hearts* and Judah Halevi’s *The Kuzari*. Over the course of the Starr Fellowship, I realized that these research findings should be presented in two separate volumes. The first of these planned volumes will be dedicated to Bahya ibn Paquda’s work and its relation to the early Islamic ascetic tradition of the



Photo by Leisa Thompson

zuhd. I have devoted my time as a Starr Fellow at Harvard to working on this forthcoming volume. In our March 17, 2021 Starr Seminar, I presented a complete outline of my study on *Duties of the Hearts* and the *zuhd* tradition. I hope to further advance my work on this study in the coming months, and to spend this time physically present at Harvard. ■

MICHAL OHANA

Bar-Ilan University

During my year as a Starr Fellow at Harvard's Center for Jewish Studies, I was able to nearly complete a full draft of my new book. Unfortunately, I was not able to enjoy the privilege of being on campus in person, even for one day, due to pandemic-related campus closures. I could not even enter the U.S. embassy in Tel Aviv!

However, these limitations did not hinder my commitment to, or progress in, my work. This fellowship allowed me to engage in full-time research. I was able to expand upon my prior research on the Jewish thought of the Sephardic community in Fez (Morocco) during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This work argues that the three schools of Jewish thought that had prevailed in Spain—philosophy, astrology, and Kabbalah—continued to shape the world views in the Sephardic community of Fez. This year, I broadened this research beyond Fez to other Sephardic communities in the Maghreb, such as Tlemcen and Algiers. I identified Jewish thinkers and commentators, characterized the varieties of Jewish thought they developed, and traced their sources of influence.

"This work argues that the three schools of Jewish thought that had prevailed in Spain—philosophy, astrology, and Kabbalah—continued to shape the world views in the Sephardic community of Fez."

—Michal Ohana



Even though our weekly Starr Seminars during the spring semester had to be conducted online, our discussions remained lively and addressed diverse and rich perspectives. I benefited tremendously from the opportunity to present works-in-progress to the other Fellows. Their feedback and suggestions had a formative impact on my work.

I am grateful to **Professor David Stern** and the entire staff of the Center, especially **Rachel Rockenmacher** and **Sandy Cantave Vil**, for their great efforts throughout this unusual and challenging year—and more importantly, for their kindness. ■



YOSI YISRAELI

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

As we all know, last year did not roll out as planned. While we prepared for our trip, we heard the news that we would not be able to travel to Harvard. While at first a great disappointment, it did not take long to see that this fellowship was the best one could hope for this year.

The devotion of the staff, the intellectual companionship among the Fellows and the faculty, and the rich online resources that Harvard offers made the year remarkably fruitful and invigorating. It provided the ideal opportunity to advance my research on Jewish-Christian intellectual relations in the fifteenth century. In particular, I was able to develop my project, *Historicizing Jewish Dogma: Mass Conversions and the Remake of Jewish Faith*. Focusing on key dogmatic writings that were composed by fifteenth-century Jewish scholars, the project aims to contextualize the reinvention of Jewish dogma at the eve of the early modern

"...the intellectual companionship among the Fellows and the faculty, and the rich online resources that Harvard offers, made the year remarkably fruitful and invigorating."

—Yosi Yisraeli

period within the social, political, and religious circumstances of the mass conversion crisis in Spain. I argue that the making of Judaism into a *faith*-based religion aimed at that time to both answer the challenge of Christian scholasticism and expand the social-legal boundaries of Judaism. In the process, the theological substructure of crypto-Judaism was also laid down.

The presentations and discussions around this year's theme have contributed greatly to the project's evolution. The conversation and comments on my chapter dealing with Joseph Albo's *Book of Principles*, were as invaluable as they were generous and engaging. This warm and supportive spirit has also assisted me greatly in the academic job market. During this year, I have been offered a tenure-track position at Bar-Ilan University, which I will begin in Fall 2021. I extend my deepest gratitude to **Professors David Stern, Jay Harris and Elliot Wolfson** for their hospitality and support; to **Rachel Rockenmacher, Sandy Cantave Vil, and Allison Andrews** for their generous assistance; and to the rest of the Fellows for a wonderful year of intellectual encounters and new friendships. ■

MICHAEL ZANK

Boston University

It was a pleasure to join the group, convened by **Professors Stern, Harris, and Wolfson**, for a series of intellectual conversations that met through the fall 2020 semester, and the Starr Seminars during the spring 2021 semester. The intellectual conversations were self-directed and offered us the opportunity to get acquainted with one another's prior research. These sessions were extensive and relaxed, even on Zoom and across different time zones, and we developed a great rapport as a community of scholars. Topics included the question of Christian echoes in Kabbalah, Sufi influence on medieval Jewish spirituality, the role of conversos in the development of Spanish post-*reconquista* royalist political theologies, the influence of Muslim legal theory on the Jewish thinkers of al-Andalus, and the development of Sephardic Jewish philosophical writing in North Africa. It was an honor and a pleasure to learn from everyone.

As an Honorary Starr Fellow, I enjoyed access to the Harvard library resources, which enabled me to advance my own research on Maimonides and his modern readers: Spinoza, Cohen, and Strauss. Reading voraciously over the course of this year and guided by insights and suggestions offered in the Starr Seminars, I particularly immersed myself in classical and contemporary Spinoza scholarship.



"As an Honorary Starr Fellow, I enjoyed access to the Harvard library resources, which enabled me to advance my own research on Maimonides and his modern readers. Reading voraciously over the course of this year and guided by insights and suggestions offered in the Starr Seminars, I particularly immersed myself in classical and contemporary Spinoza scholarship."

—Michael Zank

My seminar presentation explored the topic of literary aspects of philosophical writing, with a focus on Maimonides. While my interest in the question of philosophy as literature was initially awakened by Leo Strauss' attention to the art of exoteric writing, I am now more interested in the hermeneutic complexities involved in philosophical reception and interpretation, the inevitability of misreading, and the always tenuous constructions of philosophical traditions.

Maimonides's *Guide for the Perplexed*, which is the focus of my current preoccupation, is—according to Strauss—a book "sealed with seven seals." My goal is not so much to unlock the *Guide* as such, but to read Maimonides in light of his modern readers: how did *they* read and understand the *Guide* and what did they learn from it as they developed their own philosophical reasoning and writing in conversation with, but also in distinction from, the Great Eagle? ■

INTELLECTUAL CONVERSATIONS FORUM WITH 2020–2021 STARR FELLOWS



OUR 2020–2021 VISITORS were unfortunately not able to gather in person and have the impromptu, informal discussions that have been such a valuable part of the Fellowship at the Center for Jewish Studies for so many prior Fellows. Instead, this group initiated regular virtual gatherings, at which they shared projects beyond their official Harvard research, either prior research or additional work. These meetings provided the opportunity for scholars to get to know a bit more about each other, their interests and areas of expertise, and helped them to share ideas and build connections.

*Hosted by Professor Michael Zank and
Coordinated by Dr. Yosi Yisraeli*

September 15, 2020
Coordinating meeting

September 24, 2020
Jonatan Benarroch, Starr Fellow, "Mythic Aspects of Halakhic Practice"

October 15, 2020
Ehud Krinis, Starr Fellow, "Conversation with Ehud Krinis"

October 29, 2020
Marc Herman, Starr Fellow, "Imagining Revelation: Medieval Jewish Presentations of the Oral Torah in an Islamic Key"

November 12, 2020

Michal Ohana, Starr Fellow, "Jewish Thought in Fez in the 16th–17th Centuries"

November 19, 2020

Michael Zank, Honorary Starr Fellow, "Torah v. Jewish Law: A Genre-Critical Approach to the Political Theology of Reappropriation"

December 17, 2020

Yosi Yisraeli, Starr Fellow, "Judeo-Christianity Act II?"

January 7, 2021

Rabbi Shmuel Hain, Silver Fellow, "Aveilut in a Pandemic"

GIVING TO THE FRIENDS OF CJS

FRIENDS OF THE CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES

In December 1984, Peter Solomon (AB '60, MBA '63) announced the establishment of the Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies. The Friends of the CJS provides an ongoing base of support for the Center and enables it to expand its present areas of activity. Annual support from the Friends helps shape the future of Jewish studies and sustains the Center as an influential, multifaceted enterprise at Harvard. To make a gift by credit card to the Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University, or any of the CJS funds, please use the Harvard University online giving form.

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STACY DICK

Photo by John Deputy

How to Give Online

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Please make checks payable to "The President and Fellows of Harvard College" and include a note in the memo line of the check that this is for the "Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies" (or the name of the other fund of your choice).

NAMED FUNDS

Those pursuing Jewish studies at Harvard University may benefit from a number of funds established over the years. New funds are formed continuously; the following funds are currently supporting students and scholars in their pursuit for greater knowledge and achievement in this field. These also may support publications and events at the Center for Jewish Studies. For further information on establishing a named fund, or contributing to one, please contact our office at cjs@fas.harvard.edu

NAMED STUDENT FELLOWSHIP AND PRIZE FUNDS & GRANTS

Mandell L. Berman Fellowship
Barney and Essie Cantor Scholarship Fund
Harry Edison Fund
Anna Marnoy Feldberg Financial Aid Fund
Suzanne and Dr. Lawrence Fishman Fellowship Fund
Leo Flax Fellowship
Goldhirsh-Yellin Foundation Fund for Undergraduate and Graduate Travel to Israel
Hertog Undergraduate Study Abroad Fund
Edward H. Kavinsky Fellowship
Lissner Jewish Research, Language and History Fund
Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund
Raphael and Deborah Melamed Fellowship in Jewish Studies
Aaron and Clara Rabinowitz Trust Fellowship
Charles H. Revson Foundation Grant in support of Graduate and Undergraduate Research and Supplemental Study in Jewish Studies
Lewis and Alice Schimberg Graduate Student Fellowship Fund
Barry Shrage Travel and Research Fund for Jewish Studies
*Nathan and Geraldine Snyder Fund for Jewish Studies
Sidney L. Solomon Fellowship
Sosland Family Fellowship
Harry and Cecile Starr Prizes in Jewish Studies
Alan M. and Katherine W. Stroock Family Fellowship for Advanced Research in Judaica Studies
Isadore Twersky Fellowship

NAMED TEACHING AND RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS

Morris and Beverly Baker Foundation Yiddish Language Instruction Fund
Joseph Engel Fund
Freed Research Fund in the Center for Jewish Studies
Isaac-Melech, Icla and Zelman Rykles Memorial Fund
Edwin Lichtig, Jr. Research and Teaching Fund

Esther Miller Endowed Fund for Yiddish Studies
Rohr Visiting Professorship in Modern Israel Studies
Daniel Jeremy Silver Fellowship
Harry Starr Fellows in Judaica Fund
Harry Starr Teaching and Research Fund
Alan M. Stroock Fund for Advanced Research in Judaica
Alan M. and Katherine W. Stroock Fund for Innovative Research in Judaica
Selma and Lewis H. Weinstein Fund for Jewish Studies
Gerard Weinstock Visiting Professorship

NAMED LECTURE AND PUBLICATION FUNDS

Yigal Allon Memorial Fund
Abraham and Rachel Bornstein Fund
Alan and Elisabeth Doft Lecture and Publication Fund
Robert and Florence Dreben Lecture and Publication Fund
Harry Elson Lecture and Publication Fund
William Landau Lecture and Publication Fund
Leon I. Mirell Lecture Fund
*Charles H. Revson Foundation Lecture Fund
Estelle and Howard Rubin Fund
Martin D. and Helen B. Schwartz Lecture Fund
Harry A. Wolfson Publication Fund
Yanoff Taylor Lecture and Publication Fund

OTHER NAMED FUNDS

Center for Jewish Studies Fund
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Josephine and Martin Gang Memorial Fund
Jeanette and Ludwig Goldschmidt Bequest for the Benefit of the Center for Jewish Studies
Judith and David Lobel Fund for the Center for Jewish Studies

*New funds added during 2020–2021



L–R: Harvard President Lawrence Bacow, FAS Dean Claudine Gay, Peter Solomon, Susan Solomon

Photo by John Deputy

WITH GRATITUDE TO OUR DONORS

NEW FUNDS

NATHAN AND GERALDINE SNYDER FUND

A generous gift from Nathan Snyder A.B. '56 and Geraldine Snyder established the **Nathan and Geraldine Snyder Fund**. This fund will help to support student research and travel, lectures in Jewish studies and their publication, as well as instruction in Jewish languages. Our Yiddish and modern Hebrew programs are especially grateful for this assistance, as are our students, who are eager to travel again to conduct research.

CHARLES H. REVSON FOUNDATION LECTURE FUND

The Charles H. Revson Foundation established a fund to support a new lecture series, the Stacy Dick Lectures at the Center for Jewish Studies. This series honors long-time Friend of the CJS and Charles H. Revson Foundation Board member, **Stacy Dick, A.B. '78 and Ph.D. '83**. Dr. Dick is President and Chief Financial Officer at Equilibra Partners and has worked in and taught about the field of finance. We have enjoyed working with the Charles H. Revson Foundation and with Dr. Dick over the years. We were pleased to host the inaugural Stacy Dick Lecture in his honor this October. We are grateful to the Charles H. Revson Foundation for its generous support.

SPECIAL GIFTS TO THE FRIENDS OF THE CJS FUND

DONALD SHAPIRO

The Center for Jewish Studies is very grateful for the generous bequest of **Dr. Donald Lester Shapiro '53** to the Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies fund. We are honored that he considered the Center in his legacy.

Dr. Shapiro's daughter, **Donna Rabiner**, described the passion and intellect her father brought to his many interests and the causes he supported. He was a lifelong learner who immersed himself in arts and culture. In her words, "music was his greatest joy." He also relished discussions and sharing his vast knowledge. "His infectious interest in things drew you in," she said. He loved conversation with young people and identified with and nurtured those who struggled. He grew up poor, and was proud to attend and graduate from Harvard; he later became a psychiatrist. These funds will help to support



DR. DONALD SHAPIRO '53 AND FAMILY

the modern Hebrew and Yiddish language programs, and undergraduate summer research and study. "His Harvard experience stayed with him, forming him as an adult. He never forgot what Harvard did for him and wanted to pay it forward. He wanted to do something meaningful for undergrads," noted Rabiner. "Dad would love that approach."

DAVID LINK

We appreciate the thoughtfulness of the family of **Dr. David Armand Link '66**, for having chosen the Center for Jewish Studies as one of the charitable funds through which he may be remembered. Dr. Link was a devoted Friend of the Center for Jewish Studies. He had a remarkable career as a medical doctor, devoted to public and community health service as well as to Jewish studies, the study of Talmud and teaching Agnon. <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/bostonglobe/name/david-link-obituary?pid=199381062>

ANONYMOUS GIFTS

An anonymous donor kindly offered a gift to help support a much-needed update to our website. Thanks to this support, we are working with Harvard Web Publishing specialists to make our Center for Jewish Studies Website more comprehensive, user-friendly and secure. Please keep an eye out over the next few months to see the improvements! ■

VIRTUAL LECTURES & EVENTS

FALL SEMESTER 2020

SEPTEMBER 23, 2020

Yiddish and Gender

SANDRA FOX

Scholar of American Jewish history, Jewish youth and childhood, and contemporary Yiddish culture, Fox is Jim Joseph Postdoctoral Fellow in Education and Religion at Stanford University; and Founder and Executive Producer of the Yiddish-language podcast, *Vaybertaytsh*.

Abraham and Rachel Bornstein Fund

SEPTEMBER 30, 2020

The Art of Oral History

CHRISTA P. WHITNEY

Director of the Yiddish Book Center's Wexler Oral History Project, Whitney oversees a growing collection of more than 1,000 in-depth video interviews about Yiddish language and culture with people of all ages and backgrounds.

Abraham and Rachel Bornstein Fund

OCTOBER 2, 2020

What are We Made of? Israeli Artist Hanoch Piven speaks about the 'Collage Way'

HANOCH PIVEN

Israeli mixed-media artist best known for his celebrity caricatures, Piven is an award-winning illustrator, educator, and seasoned creative instigator.

Lissner Jewish Research, Language and History Fund

OCTOBER 5, 2020

ANNUAL CJS FALL RECEPTION

OCTOBER 14, 2020

Alexander Goldenweiser, an American Anthropologist with Russian Jewish Roots

SERGEI KAN

Professor of Anthropology and Native American Studies, Dartmouth College; Faculty Associate, Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Harvard University

Howard and Estelle Rubin Fund, Yanoff Taylor Lecture and Publication Fund

Cosponsored by the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies and the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University. The Project on Russian and Eurasian Jewry has been made possible with the generous support of Genesis Philanthropy Group



SANDRA FOX



CHRISTA P. WHITNEY



HANOCH PIVEN



SHTERNA GOLDBLOOM



SAUL ZARITT

OCTOBER 15, 2020

Jewish American Writing and World Literature: A Symposium

SAUL ZARITT

Associate Professor of Yiddish Literature, Harvard University

In conversation with:

SUNNY YUDKOFF

Assistant Professor, Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic, University of Wisconsin-Madison

ADRIANA X. JACOBS

Associate Professor and Cowley Lecturer in Modern Hebrew Literature, University of Oxford

Abraham and Rachel Bornstein Fund with the Department of Comparative Literature, and the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University

OCTOBER 21, 2020

Axes In OTD [Off the Derech] Art

SHTERNA GOLDBLOOM

Artist whose photography is inspired by experiences of reconciling queer identity and Hasidic upbringing. Shterna Goldbloom's work can be seen in *Lilith* magazine, *In Geveb*, *Hyperallergic*, *Vaybertaytsh*, and *Judisk Krönika*.

Abraham and Rachel Bornstein Fund

OCTOBER 22, 2020

Ghetto: The History of a Word

DANIEL B. SCHWARTZ

Associate Professor of History, Columbian College of Arts and Sciences, The George Washington University

Leon I. Mirell Lecture Fund with the Jews in Modern Europe Seminar, Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, Harvard University

OCTOBER 22, 2020

Reading Across the Lines: Narrative and the Theorization of Ritual in Leviticus 9–10

LIANE FELDMAN

Assistant Professor, Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies, New York University

Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies with the Hebrew Bible Workshop

OCTOBER 23, 2020

Soviet Childhood

ZOYA CHERKASSKY-NNADI

Israeli artist whose work focuses on her personal experiences, including childhood in the Soviet Union and migration to Israel. Cherkassky-Nnadi's work is included in the permanent collections of the Jewish Museum, New York; Jewish Museum, Berlin; Jewish Museum, Vienna; the Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv; and the Doron Sebbag Art Collection, Tel Aviv.

Harry Elson Lecture and Publication Fund



ZOYA CHERKASSKY-NNADI

OCTOBER 26, 2020

A Jewish Look at World Politics: The Catalan Mappamundi (Majorca, 1375)

KATRIN KOGMAN-APPEL

Alexander von Humboldt Professor of Jewish Studies, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, Institut für Jüdische Studien

Harry Edison Fund with the Committee on Medieval Studies; the Cartography Seminar and the Jewish Cultures and Societies Seminar, Mahindra Humanities Center, Harvard University

NOVEMBER 6, 2020

Tehran Children: On the Trail of WWII Refugees in Central Asia and the Middle East

MIKHAL DEKEL

Professor and Director of the Rifkind Center for the Humanities and Arts, the CUNY Graduate Center and the City College of New York, CUNY

William Landau Lecture and Publication Fund with the Jews in Modern Europe Seminar, Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, Harvard University

NOVEMBER 9, 2020

Chosen for the Screen: Jews and TV, A Conversation with Emily Nussbaum, Staff Writer for The New Yorker, Moderated by Shayna Weiss

EMILY NUSSBAUM

The New Yorker staff writer and Pulitzer Prize-winner, Nussbaum is the author of *I Like to Watch: Arguing My Way Through the TV Revolution*, a collection that combines timely new works with previously published essays and profiles, mostly from her groundbreaking stint as TV critic at *The New Yorker*.



Photo by Clive Thompson

SHAYNA WEISS, PH.D.

Associate Director, Schusterman Center for Israel Studies, Brandeis University

Alan and Elisabeth Doft Lecture and Publication Fund

NOVEMBER 18, 2020

A Shmues Mit Anthony Russell

ANTHONY RUSSELL

Vocalist, composer, and arranger specializing in music in the Yiddish language

Joseph Engel Fund

NOVEMBER 18, 2020

Russian Jews in the Turmoil of History: Three Ages of Stalinism

LUBA JURGENSON

Professor, Department of Slavic Studies, Université Paris-Sorbonne

Howard and Estelle Rubin Fund, Yanoff Taylor Lecture and Publication Fund

Cosponsored by the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies and the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University. The Project on Russian and Eurasian Jewry has been made possible with the generous support of Genesis Philanthropy Group

DECEMBER 3, 2020

The Jewish Eighteenth Century and the Transformative Year 1782

SHMUEL FEINER

Professor of Jewish History, Bar-Ilan University; Chair, The Historical Society of Israel

William Landau Lecture and Publication Fund with the Jews in Modern Europe Seminar, Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, Harvard University



Photo by Michelle Davidson-Schapiro



TRAUMA AND TRANSCENDENCE: THE SHADOW OF THE HOLOCAUST ON AN ISRAELI SINOLOGIST

A talk by Prof. Song Lihong (Nanjing University)
Chair/discussant: Prof. David Stern (Harvard University)



SONG LIHONG

DECEMBER 6, 2020

Rage & Glory: The Restoration of an Israeli Controversy

AVI NESHER

Acclaimed Israeli film director

INTRODUCTION: DEREK PENSLAR

William Lee Frost Professor of Jewish History, Harvard University

INTERLOCUTOR: AVNER SHAVIT

Israeli film critic

Cosponsored by the Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard Hillel supported by the Brachman Family Israel Initiative, the Consulate General of Israel to New England, and the Office of Cultural Affairs, Consulate General of Israel in New York

DECEMBER 7, 2020

Trauma and Transcendence: The Shadow of the Holocaust on an Israeli Sinologist

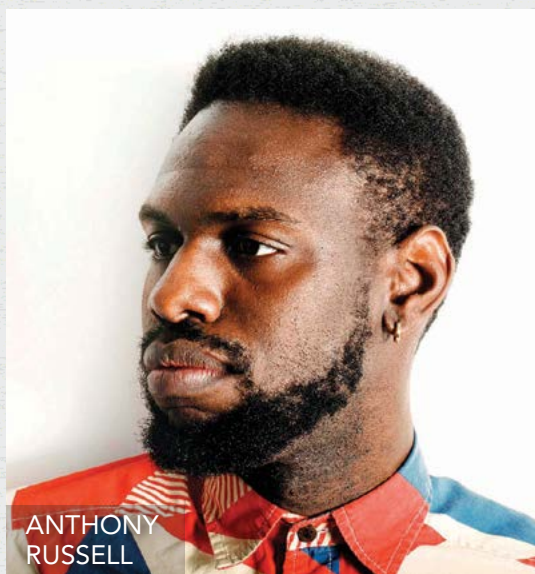
SONG LIHONG

Professor, Department of Religious Studies and Glazer Institute of Jewish and Israel Studies, Nanjing University; Harvard-Yenching Institute Visiting Scholar 2020-21

CHAIR/DISCUSSANT: DAVID STERN

Harry Starr Professor of Classical and Modern Jewish and Hebrew Literature and Professor of Comparative Literature, Harvard University

Cosponsored by the Center for Jewish Studies with the Harvard-Yenching Institute, Harvard University



ANTHONY
RUSSELL

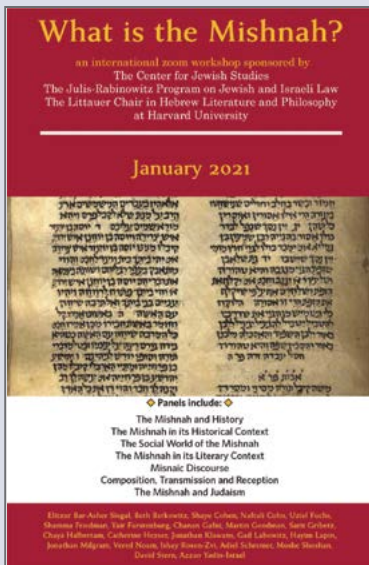
Photo by Adam Wiseman



Illustration by Zoya Cherkassky-Nnadi

WHAT IS THE MISHNAH?

JANUARY 2021 CONFERENCE



MARTIN GOODMAN

University of Oxford, *"The Presentation of the Past in the Mishnah"*

HAYIM LAPIN

University of Maryland, *"The Mishnah as a Historical Document"*

JANUARY 7

The Mishnah in its Historical Context

VERED NOAM

Tel Aviv University, *"Mishnah and the Second Temple/Qumran"*

CATHERINE HEZSER

University of London, *"Mishnah and Greco-Roman Law"*

JONATHAN MILGRAM

The Jewish Theological Seminary, *"Mishnah and Ancient Near East Law"*

JANUARY 11

Mishnaic Discourse

ELITZUR BAR-ASHER SIEGAL

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, *"Mishnaic Hebrew/Language"*

BETH BERKOWITZ

Barnard College, *"Rhetoric (including mahloket)"*

MOSHE SHOSHAN

Bar-Ilan University, *"Narrative"*

An international Zoom workshop cosponsored by the Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University; the Julis-Rabinowitz Program on Jewish and Israeli Law, Harvard Law School; and the Littauer Chair in Hebrew Literature and Philosophy, Harvard University

JANUARY 5

The Mishnah and History

SHAYE COHEN

Harvard University, Opening Remarks

JANUARY 12

The Social World of the Mishnah

JONATHAN KLAUANS

Boston University, *"Priests and Pietists"*

ADIEL SCHREMER

Bar-Ilan University, *"Heretics"*

ISHAY ROSEN-ZVI

Tel Aviv University, *"Gentiles"*

GAIL LABOVITZ

American Jewish University, *"Women and Gender"*

JANUARY 14

The Mishnah in its Literary Context

YAIR FURSTENBURG

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, *"The Literary Evolution of the Mishnah"*

SHAMMA FRIEDMAN

The Jewish Theological Seminary, *"Mishnah and Tannaitic Literature"*

AZZAN YADIN-ISRAEL

Rutgers University, *"Mishnah and Tannaitic Midrash"*

JANUARY 19

Composition, Transmission and Reception

DAVID STERN

Harvard University, *"Early Transmission/Publication of the Mishnah"*

UZIEL FUCHS

Bar-Ilan University and Herzog College, *"From the Geonim to the Age of Print"*

CHANAN GAFNI

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, *"From the Age of Print to the Nineteenth Century"*

JANUARY 21

The Mishnah and Judaism

CHAYA HALBERSTAM

King's University College at Western University, *"Mishnah and Torah"*

SARIT GRIBETZ

Fordham University, *"Holiness in the Mishnah"*

NAFTALI COHN

Concordia University, *"Mishnah as Utopia"*



ASAF
BEISER



ASAF
SABAN



ROTEM
GILADI

JANUARY 27, 2021

ANNUAL CJS SPRING RECEPTION

FEBRUARY 18, 2021

*Historical Criticism and Modern Questions:
Writing about the Binding of Isaac*

AARON KOLLER

Associate Professor of Near Eastern and Jewish Studies,
Yeshiva University

*Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies with the Hebrew Bible
Workshop*

FEBRUARY 19, 2021

*Writing Comedy and Thrillers in Israel—
Between The Jews are Coming and Fauda*

ASAF BEISER

Screenwriter and co-creator of one of the most
successful satires in Israel, *The Jews are Coming*

Harry Edison Fund

FEBRUARY 24, 2021

*To Flee or Not to Flee? Soviet Jews Face the
German Invasion*

KIRIL FEFERMAN

Senior Lecturer, Israel Heritage Department, Ariel
University

Yanoff Taylor Lecture and Publication Fund

Cosponsored by the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies
and the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University. The Project
on Russian and Eurasian Jewry has been made possible with the
generous support of Genesis Philanthropy Group

FEBRUARY 26, 2021

Paradise – A New Short Movie

ASAF SABAN

Director, screenwriter, and producer known for *On Leave*
(2009), *Blessed Is the Man* (2018) and *Outdoors* (2017)

Harry Edison Fund

MARCH 11, 2021

*The Rise and Fall of Jewish International Politics,
1919-1949*

ROTEM GILADI

Associate Researcher, Leibniz Institute for Jewish History
and Culture—Simon Dubnow; Adjunct Professor, The
Hebrew University of Jerusalem Law Faculty

*William Landau Lecture and Publication Fund with the Jews in
Modern Europe Seminar, Minda de Gunzburg Center for European
Studies, Harvard University*

MARCH 24, 2021

*In Battle for the German Mind: Evsei Shor,
Rudolf Roessler, and the Vita-Nova Publishing
House*

MICHAEL WACHTEL

Professor and Director of Graduate Studies, Department
of Slavic Languages and Literatures, Princeton University

Yanoff Taylor Lecture and Publication Fund

Cosponsored by the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies
and the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University. The Project
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Continued page 26



REBECCA PIERCE



ANTHONY RUSSELL



MICHAEL TWITTY



TEMA SMITH

Photo by Ilene Perlman

BLACK & JEWISH: A TALK SERIES

DURING THE SPRING 2021 SEMESTER the Center for Jewish Studies and the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research held a series of talks on the intersection of Black and Jewish identities in American culture, politics, and religious life. The lives and experiences of those who identify as Black and Jewish have received little scholarly attention, despite their growing prominence in current conversations around race and religion in the U.S. This talk series aimed to amplify Black and Jewish voices and to foster new conversations around the challenges and prospects of Black diversity and Jewish diversity. Speakers included political and cultural activists, religious leaders, memoirists, artists, and filmmakers. We look forward to continuing this series in the years to come.

FEBRUARY 22, 2021

#1. BLACK AND JEWISH: A CONVERSATION

Panelists:

REBECCA PIERCE

Writer and filmmaker; her multimedia storytelling covers a diverse range of topics including race, religion, global conflict, and human rights

ANTHONY RUSSELL

Vocalist, composer, and arranger specializing in music in the Yiddish language; his work in traditional Ashkenazi Jewish musical forms led to a musical exploration of his own ethnic roots through the research, arrangement, and performance of a hundred years of African American roots music

SARA FELDMAN (MODERATOR)

Preceptor in Yiddish, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University

Joseph Engel Fund with the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research, Harvard University



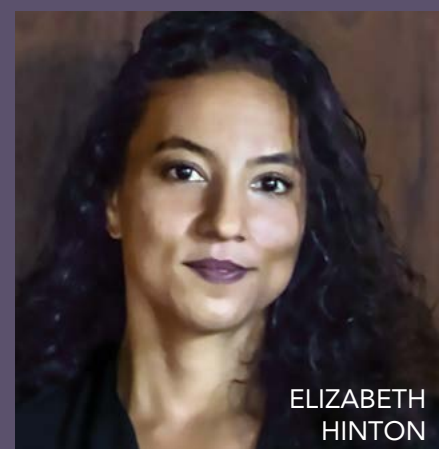
MAYAAN ZIK



TAMAR MANASSEH



REBECCA GINSBURG



ELIZABETH HINTON

MARCH 22, 2021

#2. NOT THAT FAR APART: BLACK AND JEWISH IDENTITIES IN INTERSECTION

Panelists:

MICHAEL W. TWITTY

A culinary historian and food writer, Twitty blogs at Afroculinaria.com. HarperCollins released Twitty's *The Cooking Gene* in 2017, tracing his ancestry through food from Africa to America and from slavery to freedom—a finalist for The Kirkus Prize and The Art of Eating Prize, and winner of the 2018 James Beard Award for best writing, as well as Book of the Year, making him the first Black author so awarded.

TEMA SMITH (CONVERSANT)

A diversity advocate, writer, and Jewish community builder, Smith is currently the Director of Professional Development at 18Doors (formerly InterfaithFamily), an organization that empowers people in interfaith relationships to engage in Jewish life and make Jewish choices and encourages Jewish communities to

welcome them. Smith is also a contributing columnist at *The Forward* and is dedicated to building a meaningful and inclusive Jewish community through research, training, writing and relational engagement.

Joseph Engel Fund with the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research, Harvard University

APRIL 19, 2021

#3. BLACK AND JEWISH: ACTIVIST VOICES

Panelists:

REBECCA GINSBURG

Ginsburg is co-founder and director of the Education Justice Project (EJP), a unit of the University of Illinois, a college-in-prison program that brings together scholars, students, and teachers dedicated to the vision of a more just world. Through its programs, outreach, and advocacy, EJP supports critical awareness of incarceration and reentry, with a focus on the responsibility of institutions of higher education

Continued next page

BLACK & JEWISH: A TALK SERIES

Continued from page 25

to engage individuals during and after incarceration.

TAMAR MANASSEH

Founder and President of Mothers/Men Against Senseless Killings (MASK); MASK's purpose is to put eyes on the streets, interrupt violence and crime, and teach children to grow up as friends rather than enemies. MASK's mission is to build stronger communities through violence prevention, food security, and housing.

MAAYAN ZIK

An Orthodox Jewish Jamaican-American, Zik is a social activist who co-organized the *Tahalucha* For Social Justice which called on Orthodox/Chabad Jews in Crown Heights to march against police violence in June 2020. Since then, she has co-founded organizations such as *Ker a Velt* and *Kamochah* which further her work in social justice and racial equity.

ELIZABETH HINTON (MODERATOR)

Hinton is Associate Professor of History and African American Studies at Yale University and Professor of Law at Yale Law School and author of *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America* and *America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion Since the 1960s*.

An historian who is considered a leading expert on policing and mass incarceration, Hinton's past and current scholarship provides a deeper grasp of the persistence of poverty, urban violence, and racial inequality in the U.S.

Joseph Engel Fund with the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research, Harvard University



Photo by Jacob W. Dillon

Continued from page 23

APRIL 6, 2021

Writing a Life in History: Lucy S. Dawidowicz (1915–1990)

NANCY SINKOFF

Professor of Jewish Studies and History; Academic Director, The Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life, Rutgers University

Joseph Engel Fund

APRIL 11, 2021

Harvard Yiddish Film Watch Party: The Vigil

SARA FELDMAN, HOST

Harvard Yiddish Studies program hosted a watch party for *The Vigil*, a horror film. The Yiddish language students were joined after the film by actors Malky Goldman and Dave Davis.

Freed Research Fund in the Center for Jewish Studies

APRIL 22, 2021

The House of Fragile Things

JAMES MCAULEY

Global Opinions Columnist, *The Washington Post*

William Landau Lecture and Publication Fund with the Jews in Modern Europe Seminar, Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, Harvard University

APRIL 23, 2021

Illuminating the Past. The Archaeology Wing at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem

HAIM GITLER

Tamar and Teddy Kollek Chief Curator of Archaeology and Curator of Numismatics, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

Harry Edison Fund, Harry Elson Lecture and Publication Fund



HAIM GITLER



NANCY SINKOFF



THEODOR
DUNKELGRÜN



MELISSA WEISZ



YEVGENY FIKS

APRIL 29, 2021

A Rosetta Stone of World Philology: The 1546 Constantinople Polyglot Bible and its European Readers

THEODOR DUNKELGRÜN

Senior Research Associate at the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH); Affiliated Lecturer in the Faculty of History at the University of Cambridge and a Senior Postdoctoral Researcher at Trinity College, Cambridge, England

Yanoff Taylor Lecture and Publication Fund with the Early Modern History Workshop, and the History of the Book Seminar at the Mahindra Humanities Center, Harvard University

MAY 3, 2021

Queer Yiddishkeit Symposium

Panelists:

MELISSA WEISZ

An actor, producer, writer, and consultant with a focus on giving marginalized individuals and communities a voice

YEVGENIY FIKS

A Moscow-born New York-based artist, author, and organizer of art exhibitions. Yevgeniy has produced many projects on the subject of the post-Soviet dialog in the West.

IRA TEMPLE

A multi-instrumentalist, songwriter, and cultural worker; A founder of the radical-traditional Yiddish music group Tsibele

MORGAN LEV EDWARD HOLLEB AND JOE ISAAC

Co-founders of the Pink Peacock, a queer Yiddish anarchist pay-what-you-can café in Glasgow, Scotland in 5780/2020

IRA TEMPLE



ZOHAR WEIMAN-KELMAN (MODERATOR)

Weiman-Kelman is Assistant Professor in the Department of Foreign Literatures and Linguistics at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and author of *Queer Expectations: A Genealogy of Jewish Women's Poetry*.

Abraham and Rachel Bornstein Fund

MAY 6, 2021

"An Unspeakable Jewish Tragedy" – Jews, the Munich Revolution, and the Rise of Nazism

MICHAEL BRENNER

Abensohn Chair in Israel Studies and Director, Center for Israel Studies History, American University

William Landau Lecture and Publication Fund with the Jews in Modern Europe Seminar, Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, Harvard University

YIDDISH LANGUAGE PROGRAM

SARA FELDMAN, PH.D., PRECEPTOR

Although online meetings cannot equal face-to-face, we found new activities that allowed us to continue the interactive work in class that we found most enjoyable and instructive. We also continued to build a supportive community with regular Zoom gatherings where students at all levels of Yiddish could study, socialize, and hear some live music. To combat Zoom fatigue, we took short breaks for yoga, breathing, and dance exercises—all in Yiddish.

We held a *vayz-un-dertseyl* (Show and Tell) on Zoom, where students shared what (or whom) they could find in the home: family heirlooms, roommates and relatives, pets, special gifts, crafts, even baking lessons and what might best be called performance art. This offered the opportunity to build language fluency while getting to know each other.

To alleviate eyestrain from reading online, we turned towards the study of classic and contemporary Yiddish films, a “particularly pandemic-friendly format for learning,” as one student commented. Along with the geopolitical and cultural content, students had the chance to hone language and research skills through transcribing recorded speech, assessing translations in subtitles, and analyzing dialects (as well as imitating actors and writing humorous movie reviews).

In response to students’ interest came a new format for the first-year students’ final project: a group effort to create pedagogical materials to meet Yiddish speakers’ growing need to be able to discuss family relationships without using gendered language. They evaluated existing language-learning activities and created new ones that use available non-gendered vocabulary. The

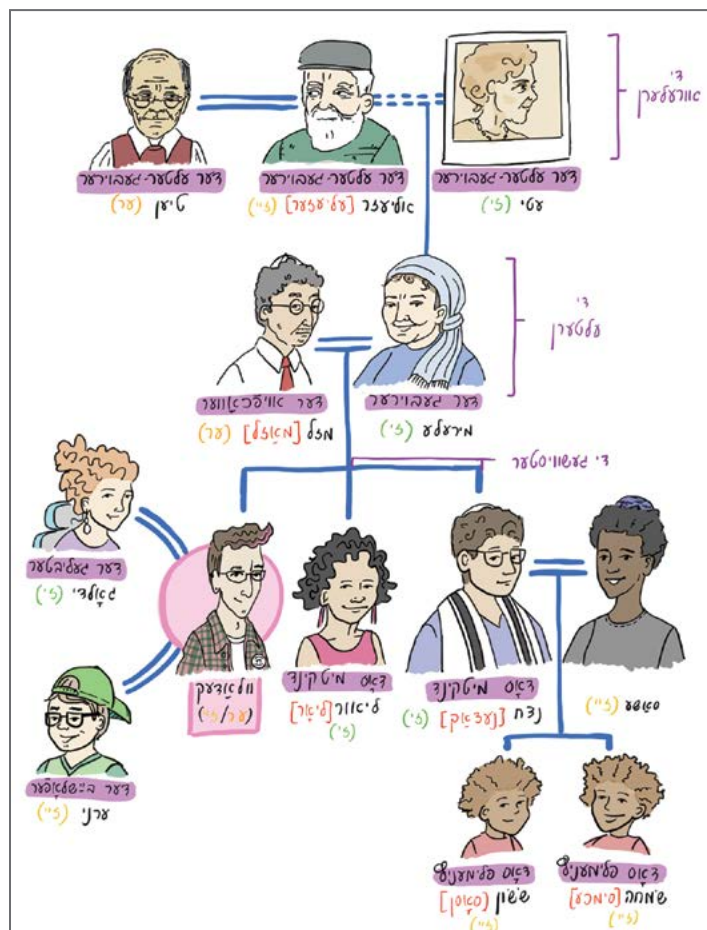


Illustration by Alona Bach

resulting exercises are being made available for other Yiddish classrooms and we have already gotten one request. With our advanced class, we joined forces with Beatrice (Brukhe) Lang (formerly of Harvard) at Johns Hopkins for a pen pal program to connect our students with young Yiddishists at other universities.

Our guest speakers came from a wide variety of backgrounds, and were able to visit Harvard Yiddish classes from near and far via Zoom. From our own campus, **Charles Berlin** and **Vardit Samuels** in the Harvard Judaica Division taught crucial research skills.

A number of visitors provided the chance to interact with speakers of different Yiddish dialects. These native speakers included Harvard Chabad’s **Rabbi Hirschy Zarchi**; activist **Rafi Albuherk**; and **Etty Singer**, whose Satmar-inflected



Illustration by Alona Bach

conversation invited discussion on the relationship between academic Yiddish and native speakers from Hasidic backgrounds.

Presenting in the cultural realm: **Francis and Mitch Harris** with a Yiddish dance lesson; **Sandy Fox**, host of a feminist Yiddish podcast; Yiddish singer and artist **Anthony Mordechai Tzvi Russell** who represented contemporary Yiddish culture and encouraged students' own creativity; **Elena Luchina** with stories and images of contemporary fieldwork in shtetls; and Harvard doctoral candidates **Rachelle Grossman** and **Uri Schreter** who shared their work with students, further strengthening the Harvard Yiddish studies community.

In our students' words:

"Despite our distance, we found ways to sing Yiddish songs together and to learn interactively."

"Even as the circumstances around us were uncertain, it was a great joy to meet with the *khevre* ...In the disruption of a global pandemic, our Yiddish class became a small cohort of daily learning and [a] welcome community."

We also offered extracurricular events to further enrich Yiddish learning and the sense of community. We hosted a watch party for the recent Yiddish horror film *The Vigil*, complete with an appearance at the Q&A by starring actor **Dave Davis** and a long, lively conversation with actor and Yiddish consultant **Malky Goldman**.

A Queer Yiddishkeit event, planned by students and faculty, brought together Yiddish artists and intellectuals from several continents—**Melissa Weisz**, **Yevgeniy Fiks**, **Ira Temple**, **Morgan Lev Edward Holleb**, **Joe Isaac**, and **Zohar Weinman-Kelman**—into one discussion on this topic that is so important to our students. The event was enhanced by Yiddish content from performer **Anthony Russell** and filmmaker/activist **Rebecca Pierce** in the "Black and Jewish: A Talk Series," co-sponsored by the Center for Jewish Studies and the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research.

On their own initiative, Harvard Yiddish students have been using their talents in Zoom concerts and plays, publishing cartoons in *The Forward*, and learning Yiddish during the summer. Many supplemented their language learning with **Professor Saul Zaritt's** courses in modern Jewish culture, including "The Politics of Yiddish" and "Mainstream Jews." We are grateful for the support of the **Morris and Beverly Baker Foundation Yiddish Instruction Fund**, the **Esther Miller Endowed Fund for Yiddish Studies**, the **Joseph Engel Fund**, the **Abraham and Rachel Bornstein Fund** and others. ■

MODERN HEBREW LANGUAGE

OSNAT AHARONI, TEACHING ASSISTANT

Teaching a language remotely poses a number of challenges. Our program was able to use our resources in new ways to meet these challenges. First, we were very fortunate that with the support of the Center for Jewish Studies, we had already digitized all of our learning materials. With our core pedagogical tools available online, we could focus on teaching Hebrew to students with whom we could not meet in person.

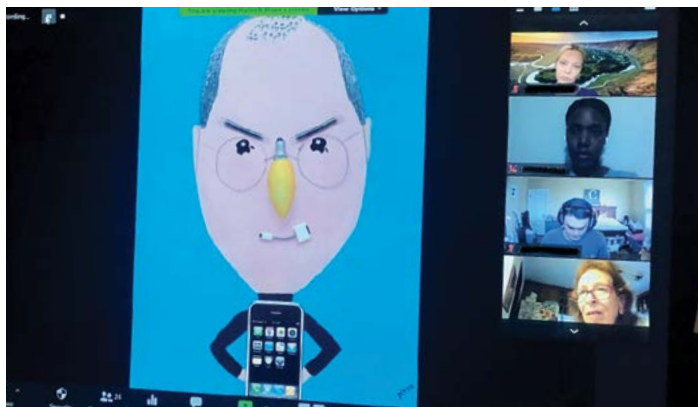
Our classes are small, and much of the work depends on fostering an informal and accepting learning community. In order to introduce the program's vision and instructors, we created a short video presentation and held live information sessions with prospective and returning students prior to the start of the academic year.

Our first concern has always been the wellbeing of our students and instructors, and we noticed that some were experiencing a great deal of stress. We devoted time at each meeting

for students to share details about their families, feelings and pastimes during the pandemic. (I must add that our students have great taste in TV series and movies!) We held biweekly oral feedback sessions and worked hard to respond promptly to students' requests and comments to provide the extra individual support many of them required.

As a team we modified conventional teaching roles to address the complications of remote learning. Instead of having dedicated instructors for each course, we shared responsibilities for all our classes which allowed us to be more flexible and responsive to student needs. For example, with the support of two assistants for the Beginning Hebrew course, we were better prepared to provide personal make-up classes when time conflicts arose in reaching students in four courses across three continents and 10-hour time-zone differences.

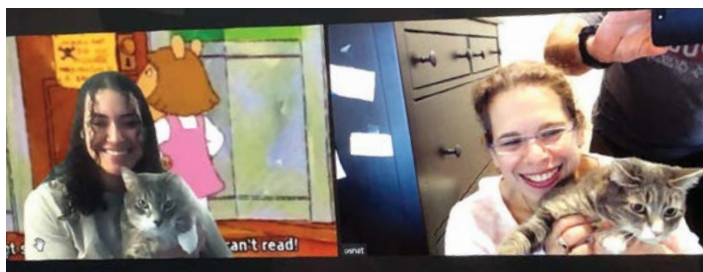
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Hanoch Piven enthralled and inspired participants with his wonderful creations using items that come to hand.



Dr. Irit Aharony with screenwriter Asaf Saban in February



Advanced Modern Hebrew student Shelly Ben David (MIT cross-registered student) and TA Osnat Aharoni practicing Hebrew syntax by comparing and contrasting their cats.

Continued from page 29

Moreover, with two instructors teaching the Advanced Seminar class, we could present learners with a wider variety of materials and streamline the use of instructor time and expertise for the benefit of the program as a whole.

The team shared ideas about pedagogical methods, as well as specialized resources for online teaching, like a whiteboard app that worked well for us. Students enjoyed the video clips of songs and translated lyrics we incorporated as a source of vocabulary. We also found ways to work around lag time on Zoom and the challenges it brought to our conversations and class singing (a wonderful way to help students learn a language). Instead, we had students engage in one-on-one peer

In the words of **Linda Liedel** (2021):

"Throughout the pandemic, nothing has provided me with more comfort than Dr. Irit Aharony's warm, melodic, Monday-3pm: 'Ma nishma? Aich haya sof hashavua?' (How are you? How was your weekend?)

"Listening to my classmates' improving accounts of the same lockdown-strolls to the supermarket, I felt connected. On Sundays, thinking of the upcoming class, I felt obliged to leave my room. Put differently, in a time marked by fear, isolation, and uncertainty, Irit's simple yet sincere question functioned as a much-needed reminder of my three-dimensional existence—an existence with unmuted feelings and actual weekends.

"For that, and the introduction to the most wonderful language, culture, and people, I will forever be grateful to Irit, Osnat and Yoni, and all of my amazing classmates. It was an honor to get to spend my senior year with you all. *Lehitraot*. TLDR: Study Hebrew at Harvard! :-)"

conversations outside class, then these pairs shared their insights with the group during lessons. Shuffling pairs allowed students to get to know a different classmate every week, and many developed friendships that went beyond the classroom. In fact, several noted this as a "great experience" in their course evaluation.

Our tradition of inviting guest speakers to our classes flourished in the Zoom world. With funding from the CJS, we were able to invite some fabulous guests: political artists **Zoya Cherkassky-Nnadi** and **Hanoch Piven**; television and cinema writer **Asaf Beiser** and director, screenwriter and producer **Asaf Saban**. Our final guest was **Dr. Haim Gitler**, chief curator of the Archeology wing of the Israeli Museum in Jerusalem. We look forward to hosting more virtual events in the future.

We are especially grateful to our students for their amazing cooperation and patience as we all learned how to navigate new technology, for vigilantly abiding to the Harvard honor code on remote quizzes and exams, and for becoming our partners on this year's journey. We feel that the best attestation to our success is their feedback. ■

COURSES IN JEWISH STUDIES

2020–2021

FALL 2020

FRESHMAN SEMINARS

Freshman Seminar 49G. The Holocaust in History, Literature, and Film
Freshman Seminar 62U. Zombies and Spirits, Ghosts and Ghouls:
Interactions between the Living and the Dead

BIBLICAL AND ANCIENT

Ancient Near East 120A. Introduction to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament 1: Pentateuch and Former Prophets
Hebrew 257. The Book of Proverbs: Seminar
Jewish Studies 139. Jews and Judaism in the Ancient World
Religion 1134. Genesis: Narrative Artistry and Theological Meanings
Religion 1261. The Book of Daniel

CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL JEWISH LITERATURE, HISTORY, AND CULTURE

Comparative Literature 186. Comparative Love: The Song of Songs in Western Tradition
Hebrew 113. Halakhah and Aggadah (Law and Lore) in Classical Judaism

MODERN JEWISH LITERATURE, HISTORY, AND CULTURE

Comparative Literature 107. The Politics of Yiddish
Comparative Literature 225. Yiddish Worlds
History 1008. The State of Israel in Comparative Perspective
History 2008A. Jewish History as World History: Graduate Readings Seminar
Modern Hebrew 241R. Advanced Seminar in Modern Hebrew. Israeli Culture: Cinema & Literature

CLASSICAL (BIBLICAL) AND MODERN HEBREW AND YIDDISH LANGUAGE

Classical Hebrew AA. Elementary Classical Hebrew I
Classical Hebrew 120A. Intermediate Classical Hebrew I
Classical Hebrew 130AR. Rapid Reading Classical Hebrew I
Modern Hebrew BA. Elementary Modern Hebrew I
Modern Hebrew 120A. Intermediate Modern Hebrew I
Modern Hebrew 130A. Advanced Modern Hebrew I
Yiddish AA. Elementary Yiddish I
Yiddish BA. Intermediate Yiddish I
Yiddish CA. Advanced Yiddish II

JEWISH LAW (HARVARD LAW SCHOOL)

Harvard Law School 2437. Advanced Topics in Jewish Law and Legal Theory

ADDITIONAL COURSES RELEVANT TO JEWISH STUDIES

Government 94OF. Law and Politics in Multicultural Democracies
Medieval Studies 250. At Cross Purposes: The Crusades in Material Culture
Religion 1529. The Holocaust and the Churches, 1933–45
Religion 2427. The Book of Revelation: Text, History, and Interpretation
Religion 2549. Women, Religion, and the Problem of Historical Agency

SPRING 2021

GENERAL EDUCATION

General Education 1009. Who Do You Think You Are? The Ethics of Identity
General Education 1095. Is War Inevitable?
General Education 1149. One Book, Two Religions, Many Truths

BIBLICAL AND ANCIENT

Ancient Near East 120B. Introduction to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament 2: Latter Prophets and Writings
Hebrew 235. The Binding of Isaac (*Aqedah*): Seminar
Jewish Studies 149. Topics in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Exegesis at Qumran

CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL JEWISH LITERATURE, HISTORY, AND CULTURE

Comparative Literature 137. Child Sacrifice, Pros and Cons: The Binding of Isaac in Jewish, Christian, Islamic, and Modern Lit
Comparative Literature 222. The Passover Haggadah
Jewish Studies 129. Josephus
Religion 1250. Judaism: Text and Tradition

MODERN JEWISH LITERATURE, HISTORY, AND CULTURE

Comparative Literature 119. Mainstream Jews
Comparative Literature 224. Jew Theory
History 2008B. Jewish History as World History: Graduate Readings Seminar
Modern Hebrew 241R. Advanced Seminar in Modern Hebrew. Israeli Culture: Cinema and Literature
Sociology 1138. The Israeli/Palestinian Conflict: Contemporary Socio-Legal Aspects
Yiddish 111. Old Yiddish
Yiddish 118. Yiddish Cinema

CLASSICAL (BIBLICAL) AND MODERN HEBREW AND YIDDISH LANGUAGE

Classical Hebrew AB. Elementary Classical Hebrew II
Classical Hebrew 120B. Intermediate Classical Hebrew II
Classical Hebrew 130BR. Rapid Reading Classical Hebrew II
Modern Hebrew BB. Elementary Modern Hebrew II
Modern Hebrew 120B. Intermediate Modern Hebrew II
Modern Hebrew 130B. Advanced Modern Hebrew II
Yiddish AB. Elementary Yiddish II
Yiddish BB. Intermediate Yiddish II
Yiddish CB. Advanced Yiddish II

JEWISH LAW (HARVARD LAW SCHOOL)

Harvard Law School 2437. Advanced Topics in Jewish Law and Legal Theory

ADDITIONAL COURSES RELEVANT TO JEWISH STUDIES

Ancient Near East 227. Critical Readings on Ancient History
Comparative Literature 193. What's Love Got to Do With It; Love Poetry of the Middle Ages and Early Modernity
Harvard Divinity School 1202. Introduction to the New Testament
Harvard Divinity School 2291. Representation, Religion, and the Holocaust: An Advanced Graduate Seminar
Harvard Divinity School 3034. The Jewish Experience in Modern America
History 12K. Arabs, Jews, and "Arab Jews" in the Modern Middle East
Religion 1529. The Holocaust and the Churches, 1933–45

ACHIEVEMENTS



WILFRIED ZIBELL

WILFRIED KUUGAURAO ZIBELL '21 AWARDED RHODES SCHOLARSHIP

by Manisha Aggarwal-Schifellite and Juan Siliezar, Staff Writers. Reprinted with permission from **The Harvard Gazette** November 23, 2020.

Hometown: Noorvik, Alaska

Concentrations: Comparative Literature and Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

Zibell plans to pursue an M.Phil. degree in economic and social history at Oxford. It's a fitting program for the Alaskan, who has spent his undergrad years studying the effects of colonialism and imperialism on the preservation and revitalization of global languages and literature. For his senior thesis, Zibell is analyzing comparative elements of imperialism in Yiddish literature and Inupiat poetry.

"Ultimately, my goal is to benefit anti-colonial struggles and struggles for self-determination, and I think language revitalization is a key part of that," said Zibell, who is currently living in Adams House.

Literature is but one of Zibell's passions. He has also been involved with labor organizing and educational development since high school, when he served on the central committee of the Alaska Association of Student Governments and on the State Board of Education and Early Development. At Harvard, Zibell worked as an undergraduate organizer with the Harvard Graduate Student Union. He has remained committed to community organizing, working on COVID-19 outreach with his tribal association this summer.

"I really have to give all of the credit for this to the fact that I was raised in a very caring community in [my] village," he said. "Everyone has to look out for everyone else there, because of sheer necessity. My work will only be valuable inasmuch as I can benefit people who come from places like mine, both in Alaska and around the world." ■

ELI ZUZOVSKY '21 AWARDED INTERNATIONAL RHODES SCHOLARSHIP

by Jill Radsken and Manisha Aggarawal-Schifellite, Staff Writers.
Reprinted with permission from **The Harvard Gazette** December 8, 2020.

Zuzovsky (photo page 34), who is from Israel, found out about the International Rhodes scholarship two weeks ago but is still "waiting for them to call and say they picked the wrong guy."

He was joking, of course, but admitted that the doubt came in part from having to get up at 4 a.m. to interview virtually, and in part because he was one of the few arts and humanities finalists.

"We need the storytellers to reflect on and challenge the stories of this time. I'm excited and so grateful to get that type of reassurance. We have to hope that people still believe in the transformative power of the arts," said Zuzovsky.

A double concentrator in Art, Film, and Visual Studies and English with a secondary in Theater, Dance & Media, the 25-year-old grew up in Tel Aviv, which requires a mandatory military service. So, he spent part of that time as a reporter during the Israel-Gaza strife in 2014 and as an editor of the Israeli Defense Force's magazine.

At Harvard, his senior thesis is a combination short film and novella that reimagines his bar mitzvah and what it meant to "become a man during a war as a gay boy where you are not part of the mainstream idea of masculinity."

At Oxford, he plans to study historical and fictional narratives of marginalized groups. ■

2021 SELMA AND LEWIS WEINSTEIN PRIZE IN JEWISH STUDIES

The Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2021 Selma and Lewis Weinstein Prize in Jewish Studies. **Hannah Miller**, a junior in Quincy House and **Joshua Moriarty**, a senior in Pforzheimer House, tied for first place. **Eli Zuzovsky**, a senior in Dudley House, received a special citation for his entry. The Weinstein Prize, which is given to the Harvard University student who submits the best undergraduate essay in Jewish studies, was established by Lewis H. Weinstein '27, LL.B. 1930.



HANNAH MILLER '22

FIRST PRIZE:
"Each for All and All for Each:
The Philadelphia Shirtwaist
Strike of 1909"



JOSHUA MORIARTY '21

FIRST PRIZE:
"Kafka's *Beit Din*: Halakhic Au-
thority and the Mutual Impos-
sibility of Identity in *The Trial*"

WEINSTEIN PRIZE ABSTRACTS

Each for All and All for Each: The Philadelphia Shirtwaist Strike of 1909, by Hannah Miller

When thousands of predominantly Jewish young women and girls laboring in the garment industry in Philadelphia suddenly left their factories at 9:00 am on December 20, 1909, prominent union leaders, their employers, and the general public did not believe that their strike would last or that it would bring favorable results. Philadelphia was ruled by the corrupt Republican Reyburn administration, which created immense physical and legal challenges for these workers throughout their strike. Women were considered the scabs of the labor force. Through mobilizing the support of wealthier women and educating them on the importance of class consciousness, the strikers continued despite deplorable conditions and won their demands. Their success shocked the unions who then reluctantly supported them, the residents of Philadelphia, and workers and women's rights advocates across the country.

Many historians have written about the incredible strike in New York which occurred at the same time, but I have found only two scholarly articles about this remarkable Philadelphia strike. In this paper I center the story of this strike around

the efforts of the young strikers themselves. I demonstrate how their background as Jewish immigrants contributed to their ability to organize and maintain steadfast determination throughout the strike. I argue that the bravery and fortitude that the Jewish women and girls in the Philadelphia Shirtwaist Strike exhibited transformed their wealthy allies. They taught these allies about the intersections between class and gender struggles, as well as the struggles of disenfranchised immigrants. Additionally, the strikers' success inspired working girls in major cities throughout the Midwest and East Coast. Before then it seemed impossible to imagine a labor strike bringing together militant Jewish girl- and women-immigrant workers, college suffragettes, upper-class Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) members, and other Philadelphia society women. Therefore, the Philadelphia Shirtwaist strikers contributed to the wave of women- and girl-led labor strikes that erupted across the country thereafter.

Kafka's *Beit Din*: Halakhic Authority and the Mutual Impossibility of Identity in *The Trial*, by Joshua Moriarty

This article presents a novel reading of the courts of Franz Kafka's *The Trial* as rabbinic courts, or *batei din*, in an imagined confrontation with a modern secular Jew who claims to reject their authority. Through Josef K.'s interactions with the courts, Kafka destabilizes the modern characterization of Judaism as a voluntary and private religion of the nation-state,

suggesting instead that the assimilated Jew's subconscious and involuntary recognition of Jewish law precludes their full participation in public life. However, he simultaneously rejects a return to traditional Jewish observance, arguing that the law is both inaccessible to the modern Jew, who has been irreversibly severed from tradition, and unacceptable to the modern Jew, whose way of life and self-understanding as a moral agent are incompatible with its observance. This reading aims to illuminate Kafka's position between the twin impossibilities of disengaging from the law and engaging it, which jointly preclude a European existence and a Jewish one.

***Mazel Tov (or the Day I Became a Man)*,
by Eli Zuzovsky**

Mazel Tov is a polyphonic novella exploring the Jewish ritual of the bar mitzvah, or the day one “becomes a man.” Inspired



ELI ZUZOVSKY '21

SPECIAL CITATION:
“*Mazel Tov (or the Day I
Became a Man)*”

by personal experience, the project asks what it means to come of age in contemporary Israel against a landscape of nationalism, bigotry, and heteronormativity. The novella translates the traditional *bildungsroman* into one claustrophobic evening at a banquet hall during the 2008–2009 Gaza War. It follows Adam Weizmann, whose bar mitzvah party turns into a glorious catastrophe, as he takes a crucial step toward coming to terms with his sexu-

ality. Drawing formal and thematic inspiration from anthropologist Arnold van Gennep's *Rites of Passage*, the text explores the nexus between Jewishness, sexuality, and belonging. By shattering unities of time, place, genre, and narrative perspective, *Mazel Tov* challenges common notions of coming-of-age as a single-day transformation that shapes the individual—instead investigating it as an ongoing process involving an entire community. The project, which also includes a complementary short film, was created under the guidance of novelist Claire Messud from the English Department and filmmaker Dominga Sotomayor from the Department of Art, Film, and Visual Studies (AFVS). ■

ALUMNI NOTE



NEW PUBLICATION BY RICHARD YARROW '19

Richard Yarrow '19 and CJS “alum” is pleased to share the news of his first academic publication: a chapter connected to his senior thesis research, titled “For Country Through Science: Nationalism and German Scientists in the Early

Twentieth Century,” in the publication *Research Handbook on Nationalism*, 2020, Eds. Liah Greenfeld and Zeying Wu. Here is a link to the publication: <https://www.e-elgar.com/shop/usd/research-handbook-on-nationalism-9781789903430.html>

Richard's writing traces elite German scientists and the choices they faced regarding their research interests and reputations in light of growing nationalism and call for contributions to the military during the two world wars.

Congratulations 2021 Graduates!

Harvard College:

Michael Jasper (Social Studies)

Tamara Shamir (Department of English)

Wilfried Zibell

(Departments of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and Comparative Literature)

Eli Zuzovsky

(Departments of English and Art, Film and Visual Studies)

Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences:

Walter “Sasson” Chahanovich, Ph.D.

(Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations)

Jesse Mirotznik, Ph.D.

(Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations)

Zhan Chen, Ph.D.

(Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations)

LIVING HISTORY

Attending a virtual history class from the ruined city where the events took place

By Adam Zewe, reprinted with permission from **John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences News**



Shlomo Cahlon hikes along the path to the ruined city of Gamla, high in the hills to the northeast of Jerusalem. (Photo by Shlomo Cahlon)

A scorching sun beat down on an army of 60,000 Roman soldiers trudging up the steep hill that led to the fortified city of Gamla, perched high above the Sea of Galilee.

The 9,000 Jews who lived within the city walls were preparing, with a mixture of defiance and trepidation, for the siege they knew was coming—there was only one way in and out of the city.

The seven-month siege of Gamla, during which the Jews heroically repelled their attackers several times before the Romans breached the wall, seized the city and brutally slaughtered its inhabitants, is chronicled in “The Jewish War,” written by historian Flavius Josephus in 75 C.E.

Today, Gamla is an archeological site located about 125 miles northeast of Jerusalem. But for **Shlomo Cahlon**, the city ruins recently doubled as a Harvard classroom.

Cahlon, A.B. ’21, hiked up to the ruins to attend class for “Josephus” (JEWISHT 129), taught by **Shaye Cohen**, Littauer Professor of Hebrew Literature and Philosophy, in which Cahlon and his classmates are studying “The Jewish War” and other works by the prolific historian.

“As you read the story, Josephus describes how incredibly difficult it was for the Romans to even get to the city, and I felt that. It was hot (more than 90 degrees), it is up a steep hill and a long, exhausting walk up and down into the valley,” he said. “I had my backpack, but I can’t believe how miserable it would have been for the Roman soldiers carrying all that equipment, let alone for the Jews who were under siege fighting for their independence. When you see how difficult that must have been, and for such a small city so far out of the way, you realize how determined the Romans needed to be to capture it.”

For Cahlon, whose home is about 120 miles from Gamla in Tel Aviv, the chance to attend a Harvard history class in the exact spot where the events took place was an opportunity too good to pass up.

He logged into Zoom, using his phone to transmit WiFi because the signal was so weak, and managed to give his classmates a quick glimpse of the ruined city before the spotty connection forced him to retreat inside so he could join the class discussion.

Continued next page



The ancient city of Gamla, perched on a hillside, was surrounded by a stone wall with only one path leading into and out of the city. (Photo by Shlomo Cahlon)



This image shows where the Roman army breached the city walls of Gamla, enabling 60,000 troops to pour in and conquer the city. (Photo by Shlomo Cahlon)

"It may have been as hard to find a signal in Gamla as it was to conquer it," he mused.

After the lecture, with the vivid descriptions penned by Josephus still ringing in his ears, Cahlon walked through the city and took it all in. He stopped near the gaping hole where the Roman army first crashed through the city wall. Then he stood near the site of the ancient synagogue and the mikveh, a bathing house used for ritualistic cleansing, and considered what life was like for Gamla's inhabitants.

"I could imagine them going to early services at the synagogue and then going out to work in the fields. I could see the pits outside the city where they would collect water from rainstorms to use in the baths to cleanse themselves," he said. "I actually saw how Jews lived independently, not far from where I live today, over 1,900 years ago. That is something you can't understand just by reading."

For Cahlon, studying Josephus in college is almost like coming full circle. His family kept a copy of "The Jewish War" in their library, and he learned the stories as a child.

"Sometimes, when you are reading a history book, it feels like just a story," he said. "But standing there, I almost felt like I was living it all again. I closed my eyes and I could imagine how all these things happened here."

"Sometimes, when you are reading a history book, it feels like just a story," he said. "But standing there, I almost felt like I was living it all again. I closed my eyes and I could imagine how all these things happened here."

Being able to attend class in Gamla is one benefit of remote instruction; Cahlon has been attending class via Zoom since he returned home to Tel Aviv after Harvard's campus closed in March, 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Seeking out meaningful experiences, even in the midst of a global pandemic, has been a driving force for Cahlon, who is concentrating in computer science and astrophysics, with a

secondary in the comparative study of religion. He is also an undergraduate technology innovation fellow at the John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences and Harvard Business School.

Cahlon recently finished his

senior thesis, in which he studied molecular clouds in the Milky Way Galaxy in 3D.

"In addition to astrophysics, another field that aims to answer some of life's biggest questions is comparative study of religion. The comparative religion department provides me with a different lens," he said. "Studying STEM and the humanities has broadened my horizons and provided me with a larger, better equipped toolbox."

And the perspective he gained from his visit to Gamla not only provided context for the writings of Josephus, it emphasized to Cahlon the importance of embracing opportunities to keep broadening his horizons. ■

JEWISH STUDIES STUDENT WORKSHOP

MEETING DATES:

11/11/20, 12/2/20
2/3/21, 3/3/21, 3/17/21, 3/30/21

JEWISH STUDIES WORKSHOPS

by Michael Zanger-Tishler and
Sama Mammadova

The Jewish Studies Workshop is an interdisciplinary, student-led group, which usually meets every other week to discuss students' academic papers and presentations. This past year we met on Zoom, which, though often difficult after a long day of online calls, provided a nice community for participants. We think of "Jewish studies" broadly, and the talks often cover everything from Talmudic exegesis to modern American Jewry. Last year, for instance, we heard papers about racial categories in rabbinic sources, medieval Jewry and money lending, partnership minyans and authority, Jews and notaries in Provence, accents in Mandate Palestine, and those leaving the ultra-Orthodox community in contemporary Israel. This was a wonderful experiment, in part because it was held online. We were more easily able to bring in students who might not usually have been able to attend. The 2020–2021 workshop was co-organized by **Michael Zanger-Tishler**, a Ph.D. student in sociology and social policy, and **Sama Mammadova**, a Ph.D. student in history. ■

HEBREW BIBLE STUDENT WORKSHOP

MEETING DATES:

9/24/20, 10/8/20, 10/22/20, 11/19/20, 12/10/20
2/4/21, 2/18/21, 3/25/21, 4/8/21, 4/22/21

HEBREW BIBLE WORKSHOPS

by Allison Hurst

Last year, the Center for Jewish Studies and the **Harry Elson Lecture and Publication Fund** sponsored two lectures for the Harvard Hebrew Bible Workshop (HBW), a colloquium for graduate students to discuss their research. With this funding, the HBW was able to reschedule for the fall a lecture with **Liane Feldman**, Assistant Professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University. Prof. Feldman's talk, "Reading across the Lines: Narrative and the Theorization

NEW UNDERGRADUATE JEWISH STUDIES LITERARY JOURNAL, *EMET*

by Matt Jelen '22

This fall, students from Harvard College, in partnership with the Center for Jewish Studies and Harvard Hillel, are excited to publish the inaugural edition of *Emet*, Harvard's undergraduate Jewish studies literary journal. The journal is a collection of submissions from students across the College, who have written on topics related to Jewish studies. *Emet* is the realization of an idea first pitched two years ago, and the editors (**Shoshana Boardman '22**, **Matt Jelen '22**, and **Wilfried Zibell '21**) are thrilled to see this journal finally come to fruition. The team is especially grateful for the support and guidance of **Professor David Stern**, **Dr. Rachel Rockenmacher**, and doctoral student **J.J. Kimche**, without whom this journal would not have been possible. Both print and online versions of *Emet* will be available in the fall of 2021.

of Ritual in Leviticus 9–10," was the workshop's most widely-attended talk of the academic year. In the spring, the funding was used to sponsor a discussion with **Aaron Koller**, Professor of Near Eastern Studies at Yeshiva University, on his new book, *Unbinding Isaac: The Significance of the Akedah for Modern Jewish Thought*.

The inability to gather in person seemed to make the Hebrew Bible Workshop all the more necessary this past year, especially for our doctoral students who were dispersed far and wide. Students (and faculty) seemed to relish the opportunity to "see" one another, catch up with colleagues, and discuss exciting new research in the field. Additionally, the virtual format allowed for a number of members of our extended community to attend several workshops for which the drive to Cambridge may have proven too burdensome under normal circumstances. Despite the difficulty of the past year, we were excited that even more people were able to take advantage of the workshop.

September 24, 2020

"Jewish Perceptions of Transgressive Worship in the Biblical and Second Temple Periods"

Jesse Mirotznik, Ph.D. Candidate, Harvard University,
Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

October 8, 2020

"2 Kings 22–25: The Reverse Exodus"

Jonathan Mason-Wolfe, Ph.D. Candidate, Harvard
University, Committee on the Study of Religion

Continued next page

October 22, 2020 (Cosponsored with CJS)

“Reading across the Lines: Narrative and the Theorization of Ritual in Leviticus 9–10”

Liane Feldman, Assistant Professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies, New York University

November 19, 2020

“The Nature and Function of the Samuel Conclusion: 2 Samuel 21–24 as Mise en Abyme”

Matthew Percuoco, Ph.D. Candidate, Harvard University, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

December 10, 2020

“Theorizing the Forefathers: The Development of the Patriarch Identity in Their Biblical and Second Temple Reception”

Rachel Slutsky, Ph.D. Candidate, Harvard University, Committee on the Study of Religion

February 4, 2021

“A Conversation with Dr. Nyasha Junior for Graduate Students and Early Career Scholars”

Dr. Nyasha Junior, Visiting Associate Professor of Women’s Studies and African-American Religions, Harvard Divinity School

February 18, 2021 (Cosponsored with CJS)

“Historical Criticism and Modern Questions: Writing about the Binding of Isaac”

Aaron Koller, Professor of Near Eastern Studies, Yeshiva University

March 25, 2021

“The Barbarian Beheaders: Decapitation and Its Concealment in the Hebrew Bible”

Madadh Richey, Postdoctoral Research Associate, Princeton University

April 8, 2021

“Babylon and Beyond: The Shape of Isaiah 13–14 and Its Function as an Introduction to Isaiah’s Nations Collection”

Terry Iles, Ph.D. Candidate, Harvard University, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

April 22, 2021

“What’s in a Name? Some Reflections on Monotheism in the Hebrew Bible”

Peter Machinist, Hancock Research Professor of Hebrew and Other Oriental Languages, Harvard University

CJS Welcomes Itai Kagan, First in New Graduate Student Exchange with The Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Jewish Studies



FROM ITAI KAGAN

How excited I was to learn I would be the first exchange student coming to CJS from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem! Unfortunately, this ended up being only half true... I’m Itai Kagan, and during the past spring semester you might have seen me in the virtual corridors and seminars of the CJS. I am a research student in Biblical studies, writing a dissertation

titled “The Dynamics of Formulae in Biblical Psalms.” I have an interest in many fields within Jewish studies, with an inclination towards textual and linguistic perspectives.

My Harvard experience was definitely not what I expected, participating through a screen at my Jerusalem apartment. Yet I had a great time meeting and chatting with students and faculty (and administrators, of course!) and I hope to have made connections that will last. I would especially like to mention my host **Professor Andrew Teeter**; during my stay we spent hours discussing my research, and I have received from him much needed encouragement and, even more importantly, honest criticism. If anyone has not studied with him yet, run now and sign up! I hope to return to Harvard in the flesh some day. In the meantime, if anyone is coming to Jerusalem during the next two years, look me up and I’ll invite you for an on-campus tea. (Yes, I’m a tea person, but I do occasionally make acquaintances with coffee people, so don’t worry if you are one.)

PROFILES



ALLISON HURST

Ph.D. Candidate, Committee on the Study of Religion

Allison grew up in Roanoke, Virginia, where she attended public schools and especially enjoyed English and history. It was in college at the University of Virginia that she “discovered” the academic field of religious studies. Her first exposure was in a class on Hebrew Bible taught by **Professor Martien Halvorson-Taylor** (M.Div., A.M., and Ph.D. from Harvard University), who now serves on Allison’s dissertation committee. The class did not presume a Christian framework, but instead took a more historical perspective.

Exposed mostly to Christian interpretation growing up, Allison felt that it was insufficient to understand the rich history of interpretation of the Hebrew Bible. She became interested in learning more about Jewish literature. Allison’s first study of Midrash was in a seminar in college with **Professor Elizabeth Shanks Alexander**. “It was mind-blowing! I appreciated how she opened rabbinic literature in a way that someone who did not grow up Jewish could feel invited into the conversations.”

At Harvard, Allison was thrilled to be exposed to Midrashic interpretations of Biblical narratives with **Professor Jon Levenson**. She is also very grateful to **Professors Andrew Teeter** and **David Stern** for their generous time and assistance. “Working as a research assistant for Prof. Stern for several years has given me so much experience that I will use in the future—and he took a chance and hired me when I was only a masters student!”

Allison has always been interested in “how certain aspects of a story can become so intertwined with a narrative, even if these aspects are not in the text itself.” She cites the example of Abram smashing his father’s idols. “It is fascinating how different communities have different ideas of canon that don’t conform to what we scholars see on the page.” She is careful to do this work with sensitivity and respect. “Biblical studies can have a tendency to pick apart texts, but we have to be careful not to also pick apart people’s belief systems,” which she said she is not interested in de-bunking. Ideally, Allison believes, learning more about the history of the biblical text will enrich a person’s religious beliefs, not threaten them.

Recently, Allison passed her general exams and prospectus—which she strongly does *not* recommend doing during a pandemic! Her dissertation work focuses on “the development of traditions about Egypt in the Hebrew Bible. It is described as a place of sojourning and as a place of enslavement. How do these two images resonate throughout the Pentateuch and Prophets?” Her research focuses specifically on material in Leviticus and

“Biblical studies can have a tendency to pick apart texts, but we have to be careful not to also pick apart people’s belief systems.” Allison believes that learning more about the history of the biblical text will enrich a person’s religious beliefs, not threaten them.

Deuteronomy in the Pentateuch, and Jeremiah and Ezekiel in the Prophets and questions whether the depiction of Egypt is *always* a negative one. This project is inspired by the story of Hagar, the Egyptian slave woman who bore Abraham’s first child, which particularly fascinates Allison. “Why is she Egyptian?” Allison asks, “and what do we make of how positively she and Ishmael are portrayed? What might this say about the relationship between Egypt and Israel?”

Allison is especially grateful to the Center for Jewish Studies for allowing her to conduct summer research and study. “The opportunity to study Hebrew at an ulpan in Jerusalem, where I could not just learn but also use the language, was one of my best experiences in graduate school.” She is thankful to have been able to work on an archaeological dig in Israel at a site relevant to the Hebrew Bible text, Kiryath Jearim. “According to the book of Samuel, the Ark of the Covenant was here for

twenty years before it went to Jerusalem.” As graduate student coordinator of the Hebrew Bible Student Workshop, she has loved bringing students together and working with the Center for Jewish Studies to invite speakers to speak about current research in the field.

Allison hopes to pursue an academic career, though “I know it’s rough out there.” In her free time, she enjoys dancing, and has loved being part of the Boston salsa community. It has been a great break from academic life, and these friends have

been among her “biggest cheerleaders.” It was through dancing that Allison met her fiancé. They were engaged in October 2020, but have delayed their wedding due to the pandemic. This fall, Allison will be teaching an introductory course on Hebrew Bible at Boston College, will serve as the Head Teaching Fellow for an extremely popular General Education course on the apocalypse taught by **Professor Giovanni Bazzana**, and will continue to coordinate the Hebrew Bible Student Workshop. ■

MICHAEL ZANGER-TISHLER

*Ph.D. Candidate,
Department of Sociology*

Ultimately, Michael hopes that by engaging scholarship in Jewish studies and Jewish history, he can expand the way that sociologists theorize difference and discrimination.

Taking classes with Professor Hever modeled for him a way of being an engaged Jewish studies scholar, and showed Michael the relevance of Jewish studies as an active field with applications to politics and society. Michael was excited by the discipline of sociology, but has sometimes found the ways in which the field builds theory based on only a small handful of historical cases to be constraining. “I found some amazing work on the history of antisemitism that I would not have come into contact with had I not been taking Jewish studies courses... this history is largely ignored by comparative historical sociology.” Ultimately, Michael hopes that by engaging scholarship in Jewish studies and Jewish history, he can expand the way that sociologists theorize difference and discrimination. Coming to Harvard and wanting to “build Jewish history and Jewish studies into my work,” Michael has been immensely grateful for the support he has received from **Professor Derek Penslar** in his study of Jewish history. Michael believes that involving the disciplinary frameworks of these varied fields of study adds to the richness of his work and opens it to a broader audience.

At Harvard, studying with **Visiting Lecturer Yael Berda** in her course on imperialism and antisemitism was a memorable opportunity. They are currently working on an article together



Michael grew up in Cambridge and attended the Solomon Schechter Day School of Greater Boston, Buckingham Browne & Nichols, and Gann Academy. He then went to Yale, where he majored in Ethics, Politics and Economics and modern Middle East studies. After graduating, Michael won a CASA (Center for Arabic Study Abroad) fellowship to study Arabic in Amman, Jordan.

Primarily interested in examining the sociology of punishment and ethnoracial discrimination in a comparative perspective, he came to Harvard to pursue a Ph.D. in the Department of Sociology. However, his experience as an undergraduate brought him into the world of Jewish studies scholarship and helped him develop a second line of research in unexpected ways. A Yale class that examined Hebrew literature through the lens of Marxism and social theory with **Professor Hannan Hever**, who combined scholarship and activism, inspired Michael and reinvigorated his interest in academic Jewish studies.

on the history of Jews in North Africa under French colonialism, examining how the French government and Zionist movement fought to gain the allegiance of Jewish communities in Algeria and Morocco. In their work together, they are trying to answer “why trajectories of Jewish emigration from North Africa to Israel and France differed so dramatically in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco,” a question of interest to Jewish historians that they are attempting to theorize using a sociological lens.

But a different project theorizing Jewish identification has been the most important component of Michael’s graduate work in Jewish studies. By the end of his second year in the doctoral program, Michael had conducted qualitative interviews with over 80 self-identified Jewish adults in the greater Boston area, ages 18–50, on their embodied experiences as Jews. In particular, he examined the ways they were perceived by others, whether they had experienced antisemitic discrimination or philosemitism, and how these experiences influenced their thinking. Michael is extremely grateful for funding from the Center for Jewish Studies, which helped him pay to

transcribe many of these interviews. He has been transcribing and coding findings and analyzing the data, hoping to write up his findings and combine his data with those from a recent Pew study.

The Jewish Studies Workshop, which had to take place primarily over Zoom, has also been a terrific place for Michael to learn about other students’ work, share ideas, and gain feedback on his own research. Michael served as one of the group’s two student coordinators during 2020–21 (with **Sama Mammadova**). He has kindly (and enthusiastically) agreed to take on this duty again this academic year with **Tsiona Lida**.

Beyond his academic interests, Michael is an avid Boston sports fan. He also was happy to share an unexpected experience in which he served as a chaplain at Riker’s Island penitentiary for Rosh Hashanah services. Michael hopes to continue with an academic career, if he is fortunate enough to do so, or to work with a policy institute, think tank or agency conducting research. He hopes to pursue involvement as an “engaged Jewish studies scholar” beyond academics, as well. ■



SHOSHANA BOARDMAN '22

According to Shoshana, the best part of her Harvard experience has been leveraging the wealth of resources on campus in order to build “the scaffolding for an interdisciplinary approach.”

Shoshana, a senior, came to Harvard from nearby Arlington, MA. She attended high school at the Commonwealth School (in Boston’s Back Bay), “a very intense school.” In a class during her junior year, “Bible-as-History/Bible-as-Bible,” she became fascinated by the secular approaches to Biblical text. Shoshana pursued an original project that examined different physical representations of mythological figures referenced in the Bible, particularly those of angels and demons.

Currently, Shoshana is preparing to write her senior thesis on representations of demons in late antique Judaism. She

conducted research over the summer on Babylonian incantation bowls from the collection of the Harvard Museum of the Ancient Near East (formerly the Harvard Semitic Museum). “These bowls were buried under houses to repel demons in the Jewish community of Sasanian Babylonia.” Shoshana seems particularly excited when she talks about the “linguistic treasures of diaspora.” She is fascinated by the many dialects that have been found in the incantation bowls she has studied: Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, Syriac, and Mandaic. Some of these examples provide the only evidence of these particular linguistic traditions. “This falls under the question of diaspora, migration, and the blurry boundaries between what is incorporated” as elements of some cultures and languages mix

with others. She is also fascinated by languages in general, and has studied Spanish, German, Aramaic, Yiddish, modern and Biblical Hebrew.

In addition to a joint concentration in the Departments of History and Literature and in Mathematics, Shoshana is also considering a secondary concentration in either Linguistics or Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. She embraces the interdisciplinary methodology of History and Literature. She particularly enjoyed working with a History and Literature faculty member to study demon possession in colonial Peru as a form of indigenous resistance. Pure mathematics, which Shoshana also enjoys, “helps me to think about truth in an abstract sense, that is not necessarily applicable to reality,” such as the Babylonian bowl incantations.

The best part of Shoshana’s Harvard experience has been “the wealth of resources on campus.” working with medieval manuscripts in Houghton Library, taking classes at the Divinity School as a first-year student, access to the bowls in the Harvard Museum of the Ancient Near East and the possibilities to build “the scaffolding for an interdisciplinary approach.” Working in depth with faculty members in Jewish

studies, such as Professors **David Stern** and **Jon Levenson**, has been a particular highlight, as well as with then-Ph.D. candidate **Miriam-Simma Walfish**, and faculty members in math and linguistics, such as Drs. **Bena Tshishiku** and **Gennaro Chierchia**. She is also very grateful to the Center for Jewish Studies for its support of special research and study opportunities, such as her study of Talmud pedagogy, which has helped her “to think about an esoteric text building community identity.”

Shoshana has worked closely with two other students, **Matt Jelen '22** and **Wilfried Zibell '21**, to put together an undergraduate Jewish studies literary magazine, *Emet*. The first edition should come out late this fall, with the support of the Center for Jewish Studies and Harvard Hillel. In this process, she has enjoyed seeing her fellow Jewish studies students’ work, and finding a venue through which to share it.

Beyond her studies, Shoshana is interested in birding and conservation work, and had an internship in a lab studying avian cognition at Harvard, in which a parrot actually learned to read! ■



ABOUT THE COVER: WILLIAM BRUMFIELD PHOTOGRAPHS

We are very grateful to William Craft Brumfield for the gift of photographs of the Choral Synagogue in St. Petersburg that appear in this issue, which he took in 1994. Professor Brumfield described the “extraordinary experience” he had while leading a group of Tulane students to see sites relating to Jewish history in the area.

The caretaker allowed them to wander inside with caution. The light was just right, and he had the proper lens for interior shots. He was fascinated by the vine motif in the exterior ironwork, echoed by the tree branches. At the time, the synagogue was in disrepair, used by a very small community. It was built as a testament to the hopes and aspirations of the St. Petersburg Jewish community, and withstood episodes of disruption in Europe. Through the tangled branches, the inscription over the synagogue gate reads, “For mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people” (Isaiah 56:7 KJV). The synagogue, a national landmark, has since been restored.

These photographs are part of the William Craft Brumfield collection at The National Gallery of Art.

STUDENT FUNDING

2020–2021

ACADEMIC YEAR 2020–2021

GRADUATE STUDENT FELLOWSHIPS (FULL YEAR)

- **Walter “Sasson” Chahanovich** (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations) Raphael and Deborah Melamed Fellowship in Jewish Studies
- **Zhan Chen** (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations) Alan M. Stroock Fund for Advanced Research in Judaica
- **Joseph Currie** (Committee on the Study of Religion) Aaron and Clara Rabinowitz Trust Fellowship
- **Eric Frederickson** (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations) Alan M. Stroock Fund for Advanced Research in Judaica
- **Will Friedman** (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations) Alan M. Stroock Fund for Advanced Research in Judaica
- **Rachelle Grossman** (Department of Comparative Literature) Raphael and Deborah Melamed Fellowship in Jewish Studies
- **Matthew Hass** (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations) Raphael and Deborah Melamed Fellowship in Jewish Studies
- **Allison Hurst** (Committee on the Study of Religion) Center for Jewish Studies Fund
- **J.J. Kimche** (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations) Sosland Family Fellowship
- **Michael Mango** (Committee on the Study of Religion) Raphael and Deborah Melamed Fellowship in Jewish Studies
- **Jesse Mirotznik** (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations) Alan M. Stroock Fund for Advanced Research in Judaica
- **Uri Schreter** (Department of Music) Mandell L. Berman Fellowship
- **Rachel Slutsky** (Committee on the Study of Religion) Isadore Twersky Fellowship
- **Miriam-Simma Walfish** (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations) Alan M. Stroock Fund for Advanced Research in Judaica
- **Deborah Thompson** (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations) Sidney L. Solomon Fellowship
- **Dalia Wolfson** (Department of Comparative Literature) Leo Flax Fellowship
- **Michael Zanger-Tishler** (Department of Sociology and Social Policy) Bradley Bloom Fund

GRADUATE STUDENT J-TERM FELLOWSHIPS

- **Jan Burzlaff** (Department of History) Lewis and Alice Schimberg Graduate Student Fellowship Fund
- **Rachelle Grossman** (Department of Comparative Literature) Lewis and Alice Schimberg Graduate Student Fellowship Fund
- **Rachel Slutsky** (Committee on the Study of Religion) Lewis and Alice Schimberg Graduate Student Fellowship Fund
- **Michael Zanger-Tishler** (Department of Sociology and Social Policy) Lewis and Alice Schimberg Graduate Student Fellowship Fund

SUMMER RESEARCH AND STUDY FELLOWSHIPS 2021

GRADUATE SUMMER RESEARCH AND STUDY FUNDING

- **Sarah Corrigan** (Department of Comparative Literature) Edward H. Kavinsky Fellowship
- **Joseph Currie** (Committee on the Study of Religion) Edward H. Kavinsky Fellowship
- **Martón Farkas** (Department of Comparative Literature) Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund
- **Rachelle Grossman** (Department of Comparative Literature) Edward H. Kavinsky Fellowship
- **Jacobé Huet** (Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Urban Planning at the Harvard Graduate School of Design) Edward H. Kavinsky Fellowship
- **Ethan Levin** (Harvard Divinity School) Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies
- **Tsiona Lida** (Department of History), Anna Marnoy Feldberg Financial Aid Fund
- **Nathaniel Moses** (Department of History) Anna Marnoy Feldberg Financial Aid Fund
- **Rachel Slutsky** (Committee on the Study of Religion) Edward H. Kavinsky Fellowship
- **Deborah Thompson** (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations) Anna Marnoy Feldberg Financial Aid Fund
- **Dalia Wolfson** (Department of Comparative Literature) Edward H. Kavinsky Fellowship and Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund

Due to pandemic-related travel restrictions, no undergraduate funding for J-term or summer supplemental research and study was awarded during 2020–2021.

FROM THE CJS MAILBOX

I am grateful for funding from the **Lewis and Alice Schimberg Graduate Student Fellowship Fund** to transcribe over 80 qualitative interviews from my research on Jewish identification and antisemitism in the greater Boston area. When the COVID-19 pandemic began, I had just received approval to conduct interviews with members of the Jewish community in the Boston area for my qualitative methods course. As it became clear that I would have significantly more time at home (as would my interview subjects), I transformed this idea into a large-scale interview project. It deals with the microfoundations of Jewish identification, both positive and negative, how Jews navigate being seen by others as Jewish, and how different levels of Jewish identifiability shape views on antisemitism and being Jewish in the United States. Interview projects like these often stall when it comes to transcription: most of the interviews were around an hour long and amounted to roughly 20 single spaced pages. Thanks to the funding I received from the Center for Jewish Studies, I was able to purchase computer-aided as well as human transcription services, which facilitated efficient progress on this project that I otherwise would not have been able to achieve.

— **Michael Zanger-Tishler**
*Ph.D. candidate,
Department of Sociology and Social Policy*

"I transformed this idea into a large-scale interview project. It deals with the microfoundations of Jewish identification, both positive and negative, how Jews navigate being seen by others as Jewish, and how different levels of Jewish identifiability shape views on antisemitism and being Jewish in the United States."

— **Michael Zanger-Tishler**



The support of the **Lewis and Alice Schimberg Graduate Student Fellowship Fund** helped me enter the final archival stage of my dissertation in history during this time of virtual work and socially-distanced research. During the 2021 J-Term, I was able to access and analyze the remaining 100 personal accounts from Jewish survivors in Vilna/Wilno and surrounding Lithuania. This funding allowed me to carry out research in a safe and responsible manner, despite the shutdowns forced by the pandemic. Thanks to the generosity of the Center, I am now ready to tackle the writing of my findings during the fall of 2021 and the spring of 2022. In hindsight, the 2021 J-Term proved to be the ideal moment to step out from day-to-day preoccupations and focus squarely on these tasks at hand. I am very grateful for the support of the Center for Jewish Studies; it means a lot.

— **Jan Burzlaff**
*Ph.D. candidate,
Department of History*

"I was especially pleased when the Middlebury faculty prepared us to present our own short lectures in Hebrew. I now feel confident in pursuing further modern Hebrew study both at Harvard and abroad."

— Joe Morgan Currie



Over the summer, I was privileged to advance my modern Hebrew skills at Middlebury College, thanks to the Center for Jewish Studies and the **Edward H. Kavinsky Fellowship**. Although hosted on Zoom, the intensive immersion course has enabled me to quickly progress from my rusty "tourist Hebrew" to delivering presentations in Hebrew complete with Q&A sessions. My research explores the history and literature of Judaea during the Second Temple period, and important scholarship (especially archeological) for this era that exists in untranslated modern Hebrew. Middlebury's course has equipped me to access this research, as well as prepare for my department's language exam in modern Hebrew. Beyond reading modern Hebrew, a major goal of mine is to achieve fluency in spoken academic Hebrew for the sake of research opportunities at Israeli universities, conferences in Israel, etc. So, I was especially pleased when the Middlebury faculty prepared us to present our own short lectures in Hebrew. I now feel confident in pursuing further modern Hebrew study both at Harvard and abroad, and I am so grateful for this generous support of my language study this summer.

— Joe Morgan Currie

Ph.D. candidate,
Committee on the Study of Religion



I am grateful for the continued support of the Center for Jewish Studies, especially in these difficult and uncertain times. With many thanks to the **Edward H. Kavinsky Fellowship**, I continued my research on how Yiddish publishing after the Holocaust unexpectedly gained momentum. In Buenos Aires, for example, hundreds of volumes were produced in the postwar decades for Yiddish readers around the world. Though I was not able to travel to Buenos Aires as I had hoped, I could access many of the rare books at the center of my research at the Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, MA. Thankfully, they had copies of nearly all of the books that I am discussing in my current dissertation chapter – four separate versions of collected works of the Yiddish writer I.L. Peretz, which were put together and distributed in honor of his 100th birthday in 1952. In comparing these versions, which were created in New York, Buenos Aires, and Warsaw, I can see how publishers made competing claims about postwar Yiddish and Jewish culture based on their own political outlooks. Even though many of these books contain the same stories, the different ways in which they are framed transform their meaning, showing how publishers saw their role as mediators and educators who had to help their readership understand a culture that was ever more distant from their everyday lives. While at the Yiddish Book Center, I was also able to explore their rare books collection. I was most delighted to find several beautiful modernist volumes from the 1920s and '30s, which combine avant-garde illustrations, striking covers, and surprising Yiddish poetry. In addition to working with these materials, I made good use of this generous funding by spending focused time synthesizing and writing about my findings, which I hope to share at the Annual Conference of the Association for Jewish Studies in December.

— Rachelle Grossman

Ph.D. candidate,
Department of Comparative Literature

Thanks to the generous support of the **Edward H. Kavinsky Fellowship** and the Center for Jewish Studies, I was able to have a very productive summer of Yiddish learning and teaching. My summer began with a month-long Yiddish program, virtually joining the Naomi Prawer Kadar International Summer Program of Yiddish in Tel Aviv. To my delight, one of the literature courses was on autobiographical writing, and the bibliography from that class has already helped enormously as I prepare for general exams. I had the opportunity to “work” at the YIVO archives as well, through their remote research sessions and literature lectures. These summer experiences strengthened my Yiddish skills and prepared me for teaching my first Beginner Yiddish class through a local community program. I look forward to continuing my reading and research of Yiddish literature with more confidence and skills.

— **Dalia Wolfson**

*Ph.D. candidate,
Department of Comparative Literature*



Thanks to the generosity of the Center for Jewish Studies and the **Anna Marnoy Feldberg Financial Aid Fund** I was able to spend my summer taking intensive modern Turkish courses. Despite the challenges of the virtual format, it was an excellent summer of language learning, during which I completed the entire second-year modern Turkish sequence. This period of intensive study will be invaluable as I begin to study Ottoman Turkish and embark on research. With this support, I will continue to explore connected Jewish and Ottoman histories in the early modern world.

— **Nathaniel Moses**

*Ph.D. candidate,
Department of History*

I am deeply grateful to the **Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies** fund and the Center for Jewish Studies, which provided the resources for me to attend the Uriel Weinreich Summer Program in Yiddish Language, Literature & Culture at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. For six weeks, I attended daily courses in Yiddish grammar, literature, and conversation. The exceptional instructors at YIVO created an immersive and intensive experience despite the online format. My Yiddish language skills advanced considerably, and I can now read proficiently with the aid of a dictionary. In addition, the general introduction to Yiddish literature and culture I received sparked many interests for future research.

Outside of the mandatory language classes, I was able to attend multiple seminars in Yiddish literature and culture. A seminar called “Yiddish Literature Confronts (Some of) Its Others” investigated the ways in which Yiddish writers confront and understand difference. Another seminar was given entirely in Yiddish and addressed the theology of Abraham Joshua Heschel in his final Yiddish publication *Kotsk*. At Harvard, I had written a paper for Professor Jon Levenson on Heschel’s reception of Kierkegaard through Abraham in his English publication on the Kotzker Rebbe, *A Passion for Truth*. I now have the Yiddish language skills necessary to conduct further research in this area by comparing Heschel’s treatment of Kierkegaard in his English and Yiddish publications. Lastly, I enjoyed classes in traditional Ashkenazi cooking, where I learned to make bagels and half-sour pickles. I would not have been able to experience such immersion in Yiddish language, literature, and culture without CJS’s generous support. I look forward to continuing my studies in Yiddish literature and Jewish theology at Harvard this fall.

— **Ethan Levin**

*M.T.S. candidate,
Harvard Divinity School*



With the generous support of the Center for Jewish Studies and the **Edward H. Kavinsky Fellowship**, I was able to spend this summer researching and writing on three critical figures (Franz Kafka, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Paul Celan) examined in my dissertation, “The Language of Lament: Modernism, Catastrophe, and Exile.” My work examines poetic lament as a distinct literary and religious tradition in the twentieth century, a tradition that draws either explicitly or implicitly on the book of Lamentations. In their correspondence between 1916 and 1918, Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem both theorized lament and lamentation. This summer, I was able to explore how the works of Kafka, Rilke, and Celan exemplify, resist, and at times even reconcile the respective theories developed by Benjamin and Scholem. (Both singled out Kafka and Rilke especially as pioneers of modern lament and negative theology.)



This support also enabled me to work with the Modern German Culture Collections in the Houghton Library at Harvard University, as well as the Kurt Wolff correspondence in the Beinecke Rare Books & Manuscripts Library at Yale University. I was able to access correspondence, manuscripts, first editions, postcards, and even scribbles composed by or related to Kafka, Rilke, and Celan. Even during this pandemic period, I was especially fortunate to pore over forty-seven letters and postcards from Kafka to German publisher Kurt Wolff, alongside Wolff’s twenty-six responses. In their professional correspondence, one may identify Kafka’s precise (and often apologetic) instructions for how his work should best be arranged and published, alongside some of his more incisive remarks on the writer’s proclivities: “Even with the broadest experience and with the keenest understanding, it is difficult to discover the faults in literary things at first sight, for the most common individual character of a writer is his ability to conceal his bad points in his own particular manner” (letter from June 14, 1912). I am deeply grateful for the support I have received.

— **Sarah Katerina Corrigan**
Ph.D. candidate,
Department of Comparative Literature

During the summer of 2020, through generous funding from the Center for Jewish Studies and the **Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies** fund, I took part in an introductory Ladino course at the University of Washington. The course was taught virtually by Professor David Bunis, an expert in Ladino from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Throughout the course, Professor Bunis made a point of focusing not only on the Ladino language—the alphabet, the vocabulary, the grammar—but also on Sephardic culture, in which Ladino plays a critical role. We learned about Sephardic history and about modern-day Ladino speakers. We also had the chance to engage with Ladino folklore, liturgy, and song.

My motivation for taking the Ladino course grew out of a realization that most of my time in Jewish studies at Harvard had been dedicated to Ashkenazi history. As an Ashkenazi Jew, I had chosen to spend my first few years of college studying Yiddish, and in that process, I learned a great deal about my own personal heritage. Over time, I also came to appreciate just how much of Jewish history I was missing by focusing on Ashkenaz alone. It was for this reason that the opportunity to delve into Ladino and Sephardic studies was so valuable for me. It’s a history less directly my own, and yet no less central to the story of the Jewish people as a whole.

This course helped me begin to explore a side of Jewish history that was new to me, and I am incredibly grateful to CJS for that opportunity.

— **Matt Jelen**
Harvard College ‘22,
Comparative Study of Religion



“Professor Bunis made a point of focusing not only on the Ladino language—the alphabet, the vocabulary, the grammar—but also on Sephardic culture, in which Ladino plays a critical role.”

— **Matt Jelen**

I am grateful to Harvard's Center for Jewish Studies and the **Edward H. Kavinsky Fellowship** for enabling me to study in a remote ulpan last summer. This experience allowed me to make measurable progress in my Hebrew language studies and provided me with the opportunity to work with a number of stellar teachers and a sophisticated curriculum. I feel an increased sense of confidence as I proceed with my dissertation work and related research which requires engagement with a number of Hebrew language sources. Thank you so much!

— **Rachel Slutsky**
Ph.D. candidate,
Committee on the Study of Religion

Thanks to the generous help of the **Anna Marnoy Feldberg Financial Aid Fund** via the Center for Jewish Studies, I spent the summer of 2021 studying advanced modern Hebrew with a one-on-one tutor. I am grateful that I was able to pursue intensive language study during the pandemic, safely and remotely from home in the UK. As a result of my continued Hebrew learning, my proficiency in reading and interpreting sources has deepened. My research centers on emotions history, intellectual history, and Israeli and Palestinian history. I consider the relationship between emotions and moral and political judgement in Jewish conceptions of Zionism in the 20th century. As my language skills progress, I am familiarizing myself with digital archives and libraries, which will help me to advance into the second year of my doctoral studies with prospectus ideas in hand. I am very grateful to the CJS for supporting my language and scholarly development.

— **Tsiona Lida**
Ph.D. candidate,
Department of History



I am deeply grateful to the Center for Jewish Studies and the **Edward H. Kavinsky Fellowship** for supporting my research this summer!

I spent the summer working on one of my dissertation chapters. This chapter consists of a parallel analysis of written works on architecture by two contemporary figures in British Mandate Palestine. The first figure is Tawfiq Canaan (1882–1964), a medical doctor and ethnographer born in Beit Jala, a Christian Arab town near Jerusalem. In his 1933 monograph titled *The Palestinian Arab House: Its Architecture and Folklore*, Canaan retraces the history of this urban and rural architectural tradition and also measures its efficiency against the shortcomings of European modernist constructions in the region. I interpret Canaan's work in relation to the writings of Julius Posener (1904–1996), a German-born architectural critic and historian who settled in Palestine in 1935. Posener's articles on architecture in Tel Aviv are characterized by his deep knowledge of European modernism, as well as his interest in local antecedents as a means to root Jewish designs in the cultural and geographical context of Palestine. Posener repeatedly cited and extensively used Canaan's scholarship to formulate a sense of architectural belonging for his community. This chapter argues that Canaan's scholarship constitutes an act of resistance against oppression and explores the ideological stakes of Posener's metabolizing of Canaan's findings.

— **Jacobé Huet**
Ph.D. candidate,

Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Urban Planning at the Harvard Graduate School of Design

"I spent the summer working on one of my dissertation chapters, which consists of a parallel analysis of written works on architecture by two contemporary figures in British Mandate Palestine."

— **Jacobé Huet**



Photo by John Deputy

PETER AND SUSAN SOLOMON DONATE A NEW GATE TO HARVARD YARD AND HOUGHTON LIBRARY RENOVATION

Chair of the Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies, **Peter J. Solomon '60, M.B.A. '63**, and his wife, **Susan**, recently donated a new gate to Harvard Yard outside Houghton Library, as well as funds to support a substantial renovation of Houghton Library. On October 15, 2021, a special ceremony held next to the gate celebrated this event. Coinciding with this celebration, Houghton Library is hosting a special exhibit featuring Peter and Susan Solomon's impressive collection of rare children's books to Houghton Library, entitled *Animals Are Us: Anthropomorphism in Children's Literature: Celebrating the Peter J. Solomon Collection*. This exhibit will be available through early January in the Edison and Newman Room. For more information please follow the links about the **gate** (<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2020/12/new-peter-j-solomon-gate-reveals-hidden-treasures/>), the Houghton Library **renovation gift** ([https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2021/09/houghton-library-gets-an-upgrade/?utm_source=SilverpopMailing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Daily%20Gazette%2020211001%20\(1\)](https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2021/09/houghton-library-gets-an-upgrade/?utm_source=SilverpopMailing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Daily%20Gazette%2020211001%20(1))) or the **exhibit** (<https://library.harvard.edu/exhibits/animals-are-us>).



Photo by John Deputy

Top: Peter and Susan Solomon at October 15th celebration. Right: Detail from gate.



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